MORE STORIES - MORE PAGES!

The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

SEPT.
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Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

In this issue

SAX ROHMER

ROBERT BLOCH

EDGAR WALLACE

WILLIAM O'FARRELL

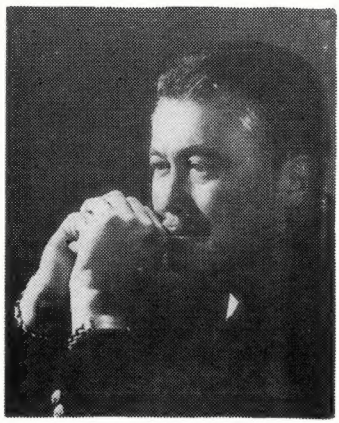
LESLIE CHARTERIS

WATCH FOR The saint ON TV

shadows in the sun

A New Story by HAL ELLSON

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION



Lady Chatterly's Lover his been legitimized, and *Tropic of Cancer* is now officially in the temperate zone; but the censors are still sniping at books and magazines and snipping selected footage out of movies, and the editor-publisher of a rival monthly which sells less than two million copies more than ours has pre-empted his own podium for a year to expound his views of moral emancipation with particular reference to the freedom of the press.

The SAINT MAGAZINE is not an active protagonist in this struggle. Our avowed purpose is to entertain rather than to educate, to startle only with a new twist on a time-honored formula, to shock only with glimpses of non-controversial depravity. Our forms of intellectual riddle and vicarious thrill can be staged, we believe, without the necessity of treading on any reasonable religious or ethical corns. So we hope to get along peacefully with everyone, without any gratuitous extension of our necks.

Yet even this mildness has not provided complete immunity from being shot at. Even I have suffered, directly and indirectly, from the efforts of certain pressure groups and self-appointed vigilantes to cut down the numbers of crime stories on the newsstands and to persuade newspaper editors to drop comic strips with a crime motif.

Therefore I am impelled, from the side-lines, to declare frankly which side I personally am rooting for.

In my opinion, there is no justification whatsoever for prohibiting any adult from reading anything, or seeing anything, which happens to appeal to him, regardless of how offensive it may be to anyone else.

This attitude is based on the equally simple and straightforward, and to me indisputable, premise, that in a free country anything should be permitted to the individual which does not directly harm another individual. Thus, stealing is rightly forbidden; but even the most pornographic books and pictures can only harm (if they do harm) the reader or the gloater, and nobody who doesn't want to is forced to read or look at them.

I strenuously deny the allegation, which has never been objectively proved, that sex and violence in books or pictures may lure otherwise innocuous citizens into committing crimes or offenses. On the contrary I maintain, with many eminent psychologists, that these imaginative satisfactions might often be sedative enough to enervate a potential offender's drive to put his dangerous impulses into practise.

And there can be no such thing as a "reasonable" amount of censorship. To give any official or organization the right to dictate what the rest of us may be allowed to see and hear is to hand over the principal weapon of all modern tyrants. Once we have surrendered to the principle of such interference, we have no guarantee that it will always be exerted only to the extent which the subjects consider "reasonable". The scissors may be docile for a time, but they have the power to grow big enough to snip off heads.

Leslie Charteris

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the impossible crime

by Leslie Charteris

THE MAN in the big loose-cut overcoat walked quickly through the dark mean streets that led to Gaydon's Wharf. Although the night was not very cold, the wide collar of his coat was pulled up high about his ears, and his soft hat was crushed down over his eyes. He kept his hands in his pockets, and one of those hands gripped a squat bulk of unlawful metal. But that was from sheer force of habit—as were the swift keen glances with which he probed every shadowy doorway and every patch of shadow. The ingrained instinct which dictated these circumstances of his passage was far too deep-rooted for him to change, although he knew that here in London, for a short time anyway, he was safe.

He paused for a moment at the corner of an intersecting street, and shot a long watchful gaze down the new road over which he proposed to travel; then he went on with the same rapid stride.

A little way down, he stopped to look at the number of a house; then he pressed gently on the door. It swung back at his touch, and he went in, closing it behind him. The gloomy uncarpeted

There are certain themes in the mystery field which are as standard as the Oedipus legend or the Eternal Triangle in an ordinary drama. They are not so much formulas as exercises, on which most writers sooner or later feel obliged to measure their talents or to find a new switch. This is frankly one of my earliest attempts to do something different with a far from novel situation. *L.C.*

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stairs, miserably lighted by a flickering gas jet at each landing, faced him; he went on up them, and stopped again outside a door on the third floor.

He tapped on it softly, giving a signal; and presently the sound of a well-oiled bolt slipping back answered him. Then the latch clicked. He was looking at a little card that was pinned to the door just above the lock; it receded from him as the door opened, and he stepped quickly forward, following it with suddenly savage eyes, and abruptly found the view blocked by the body of a man and an automatic pistol in the man's hand that dug into his chest. He straightened up.

"Quit that, you damned fool!" he snarled.

The man who had opened the door backed away, pocketing his gun. He was a tallish man with a pinched face and closely set dark eyes under thick tangled eyebrows, and his sallow complexion was even paler than the shade at which the visitor remembered it.

"Oh," he said weakly. "It's you, Farnberg."

"Who did you think it was?" demanded Farnberg roughly.

He pushed his way into the office, and the other retreated before him awkwardly.

"I don't know, Farnberg. I was scared."

Farnberg unbuttoned his coat and glared at him.

"You don't say!" he sneered. "And what were you scared of, Friste?"

"I—I don't quite know. Sit down, Farnberg—have a cigar. If we're going to talk business——"

"This is business! What were you scared of?"

"I—well, I've been threatened a couple of times, but——"

"*But?*"

"I didn't think much of it——"

"And so you just jump around sticking irons in my chest—just to help stop you thinking. And what next? Haven't you always told me no one could ever get a line on you?"

Friste shuffled back to the desk.

"I thought it was true," he said nervously. "No one ever has had a line on me. But something's happened—I've had two letters. ... I'm glad you're here, Farnberg."

"Who were these letters from?"

"You wouldn't have heard of the man——"

Farnberg turned and jerked open the door. He pointed to the card that he had been inspecting before he entered.

"Is that him?" he snapped, and Friste went dead white.

Farnberg put out his hand and twitched the card away. It was the size of an ordinary postcard. On it had been sketched an absurd little spidery figure surmounted by a symbolical halo,

and underneath was one short line of writing.

With the Compliments of the Season.

"Is that the man?" snapped Farnberg again; and Friste nodded dumbly.

Farnberg shredded up the slip of pasteboard and hurled the scraps across the room.

"That——"

"Did you—did you know about him?"

"Know about him?" Farnberg slammed the door and dropped into a chair. "I'd like to know anyone who knows more about him than I do. I know that he's the slimiest double-crosser that was never taken for a ride. He's the guy that helped the bulls to put me away last time. He . . ."

Farnberg continued the history at some length.

Then he returned to cross-examination.

"He's got onto you, has he? What were those letters he sent you?"

"Just cards—the same as that other one."

"Didn't you tell the police?"

"The police?" Friste cackled hoarsely. "That's one thing you don't know about the Saint. The police may have been aching to get him for themselves once, but they've never forgotten what was behind his record. I should think there are plenty of juries that would hang you just for getting one of his cards. They'd know there was some good reason for the Saint having noticed you."

Farnberg reached out one powerful hand and took a cigar from the box on the desk. He bit off the end and spat.

"The Saint will have to be bumped," he said, and he said it with a gentleness that was surprising after his introductory outburst. "I've been wanting him for a whole year—it didn't need this to happen for me to make up my mind about that. It was one of the things I came over here to do, anyway."

"How long will you be over for?"

"Till I've fixed the Saint and loaded the cargo I came for—however long that takes. It can't be a long time, because I've had the wire that Duncarry's on his way over looking for me. What else has been happening?"

Friste shrugged. His first scare was sliding back from his mind, and he was comparatively calm again. Farnberg's virile, confident presence had something to do with that.

"Everything else has been all right," he said. "The Saint's the only one who knows anything. The Cabaret Ship sailed again last week—the usual passenger list. I've got another boat berthing to-night with about thirty

pounds of heroin on board—it'll come through the customs in the usual way." He glanced at his watch. "I'm waiting for it now—they'll be bringing the case in at any minute."

"Distribution O.K.?"

"There's never been any difficulty about that. I do it all myself—the orders come through by post, and the parcels go out by return."

"And what about my cargo?"

"That's ready for you in the warehouse by Deepsands Wharf—all except the champagne. That'll be through at the beginning of next week. The rest is all in, exactly as you ordered it—there's plenty for you to start lading. What ship are you using, by the way?"

Farnberg grinned.

"Got my own—a dandy floating palace provided by Ardossi. He came over with me. We're both running in with Kellory now. Didn't you ever think to ask how I got over? I could never have made any of the regular boats. We came over on that yacht, like a coupla princes. I got off at Southampton, and Ardossi's seeing her through to Deepsands. She ought to be in by tomorrow evening, so if you have your men ready to start work——"

He was interrupted by a ring on the bell over Friste's chair, and Friste smiled.

"That's the heroin. If you'll excuse me—I suppose you closed the door after you when you came in?"

"Yeh! And if you'd closed it before I came in and let me ring, you'd have saved yourself a fright. What's the idea, anyway, being so damned hospitable? You just trying to make it easy for the Saint to wring your neck?"

"I didn't want to keep you waiting."

Farnberg pulled up out of his chair.

"I guess I won't wait now," he said. "I'll go down with you and see this case in—just to avoid accidents."

He led the way down the stairs, his hands back in his pockets, and stood aside while Friste turned the spring lock. Outside, the dim shape of a Ford delivery van blocked the streetscape, and just beyond the doorway two men in overalls leaned on a coffin-shaped packing case.

As the door opened, they picked up the case between them and entered without a word. They toiled up the stairs with it, and Friste and Farnberg followed.

"Does it take two Englishmen now to carry thirty pounds up three stories?" asked Farnberg sardonically, when the men paused on the second landing for a rest.

Friste shook his head.

"That case is full of canned peaches—most of it," he said.

The case was dumped into the office, and Farnberg stayed there with it while Friste supervised the departure of the porters.

He was back in a few minutes.

"Those are the only two men resident in this country who know anything about my business," he said. "They've been with me for five years, and I'd trust them with anything."

The successful negotiation of another item of business-as-usual had completed the revival of his spirits. He rubbed his hands together in blatant self-satisfaction; but Farnberg's eyes did not light up in response. They merely glanced over the packing case with professional indifference.

"That canned fruit trick is an old one, but it's good enough if it gets by," he said.

He turned away and relighted his cigar.

"Now—what's the bill?" he asked. "I'll square it and get out—I feel like some beauty sleep to-night."

Friste sat down at the desk, unlocked a drawer, and drew out a bulky ledger. He extracted some loose sheets and handed them over.

"There are the accounts. You can check them yourself."

Farnberg skimmed briefly through the papers.

Then he nodded.

"Looks O. K.," he said. "One thousand nine hundred and thirty pounds—that's about nine thousand bucks."

"About nine thousand, two hundred, and sixty-four dollars," said Friste carefully; and Farnberg, with a bulging wallet in his hands, stopped counting to stare at him.

"Are you sure you haven't forgotten the odd thirteen cents?" he inquired.

Friste spread out his hands in a noncommittal gesture.

And then a surprising thing happened.

To Jack Farnberg, it seemed as if a third hand—a lean, brown, ruthlessly capable and yet curiously sensitive hand—materialized out of thin air and made contact with the wad of bills from which he was making his selection. And then, before even his lightning-like brain could adjust itself to that amazing interruption, a total quantity of twenty-two thousand, four hundred and twenty-five dollars vanished completely from his ken.

Jack Farnberg was a practical man. He was only hypnotized for an instant; and then, with a searing oath, he spun round, his right hand flying accurately towards the butt of his gun.

"Oh, please!" said the Saint—almost apologetically.

He stood there, a bare two yards away, the perfect picture of injured innocence. His left hand, upraised in peaceable protest, was worth exactly twenty-two thousand, four hundred and twenty-five dollars cash. His right hand was travelling unhurriedly towards his pocket.

"Stop that!"

Farnberg's voice broke the momentary stillness with a bark of command that would have made a sergeant-major jump three feet into the air. The Saint had never been a sergeant-major. He raised one eyebrow three millimetres.

"Why?" he asked mildly.

"Unless you want me to fill you up with lead right now."

"Oh, but you can't do that! Ask Reginald." The Saint nodded languidly in the direction of Friste. "This, brother, is not Chicago. People are hanged for murder in this country. It's most distressing. Isn't it, Reginald?"

Friste gulped.

"I—I should wait a minute, Farnberg. You don't know what he's got up his sleeve."

This was quite true. The Saint had a knife up his sleeve, and Farnberg did not know it. He turned on Friste with his lips twisting up contemptuously.

"You moron——"

"That's right," murmured the Saint affably. "Moron and Mack. Shall we do our stuff? But who wants a worm, anyhow?"

Farnberg's gun levelled accurately at the pit of the Saint's stomach.

"How did you get here?" he rasped, and the Saint actually simpered.

"Don't you think I'm a peach?" he said.

The eyes of the other two ranged behind him to the packing-case that stood against the wall. The lid was open, and it was beautifully empty.

"Of course, I'm not canned," said the Saint, in his earnestly conversational way. "That's very important. And I'm full of heroism, but absolutely void of heroin. Perhaps she arrives in the next chapter. You haven't by any chance got a sister, have you, Jack?"

Farnberg showed his teeth.

"I have not got a sister," he said, and the Saint shook his head sympathetically.

"I was afraid you hadn't," he remarked. "Naturally, your parents could never have done it again. And now, may I smoke?"

Farnberg tossed over a cigar from the table.

"Make the most of it," he said, with venomous geniality. "I've been waiting a whole year to see you smoke it—your last cigar!"

Simon Templar sighed.

"This is not quite the reunion I was expecting," he said, "but I suppose it will have to do." He lighted the cigar, and drew upon

it approvingly. "You have a nice taste in these matters, Reginald. How can I reward you? Perhaps by setting your mind at rest. Shall I assure you that the two varlets who carried me up are still to be trusted? I was peachifying long before they took charge. In fact, I had a very jolly voyage, though the hold was a trifle stuffy. I dropped the peaches and other things over the side before we were out of sight of Rotterdam, and all the rest of the trip was free for philosophy and meditation. I grant you they dropped me with a bit of a bump at this end, but that was my fault. I should have marked myself 'FRAGILE.'"

He propped his elbow on the tail of a bronze Chinese dragon that ornamented the top of a filing cabinet beside him, and surveyed it with some repugnance. The dragon was inextricably entangled with the more distant portions of its own anatomy, and clawed limbs protruded from divers parts of its person with a charmingly simple lack of system, but its head rose clear and solitary above the mess. The head was the most hideously evil thing that the Saint had ever seen —a creation without rhyme or reason, without relation to anything human or animal, a fantastic nightmare in metal, and yet it possessed an uncannily living malevolence.

Simon Templar glanced again at Friste and indicated the graven horror with a wave of his hand.

"George is not unlike you," he remarked pleasantly.

"Now see here!" Farnberg's jaw went out, and his forefinger tightened dangerously on the trigger. "What game are you playing?"

"Mah Jong," said the Saint.

"If you think you're——"

"Oh, but I know I am," said the Saint lazily.

And then he straightened up.

"I came here this evening," he said quietly, "to give myself the inestimable pleasure of wringing Reginald's neck. Having a useful pair of hands, and a cake of carbolic soap waiting for me at home, I didn't trouble to bring a gun. I admit, Jack, that I wasn't expecting to meet you—you slightly disorganized my very complicated espionage system by coming overland from Southampton. But the difference you make is really immaterial. I shall simply postpone the bouncing of Reginald to a more convenient opportunity. And meanwhile, I shall be able to amuse myself with the charitable distribution of some of these here berries—I think I'm quite a deserving case myself," he added reflectively. "No—don't interrupt me for a moment."

He had dropped his mask of

flippant banter as easily as he had put it on, and something in the quiet gentleness of his voice held the other two silent.

For the Saint had stated the circumstances exactly, and it is quite worth recording that everything he had said was perfectly true. He had not been expecting Jack Farnberg. The Saint was blessed with the priceless gift of always knowing exactly how far he could go; and he had also, at one stage of his career, acquired a certain insight into the mentality of the American gunman in general, and of Jack Farnberg in particular. Furthermore, he had taken his Honours Degree in Bluff and Allied Sciences at the age of nine.

And all of these facts, taken together, directed him at that moment towards precisely one and only one course of action. The Saint might look the picture of insured innocence, but he was not insured, and the money would have been no use to his widow anyway because he would leave no widow.

Jack Farnberg was showing a lot of gun, and Friste had also begun to do his share since the backchat began. The Saint retired a slight but tactful distance —almost imperceptibly.

"In a few days, Jack, when you've got the lie of the land a bit better," he said, "we may be able to resume the argument. But for the present you'll just have to take my word for it—supported by Reginald's—that it would be highly dangerous for you to bump me off here and now. I've always been a cautious sort of bird. When I go out on a jaunt of this kind, I always let a friend of mine know where I've gone. And if I didn't come back, she would be reluctantly compelled to tell the police." It occurred, sadly, to the Saint, that he was straying a little from the path of strict veracity on which he had entered the scene, but he felt tremendously tactful at that particular moment. "And so, Jack, I'm afraid I can't die to-day. Besides, it would spoil the story anyhow. It isn't until Chapter Fourteen, at the very earliest, that I'm tied up in a chair with bombs lashed to my suspenders and the slow fuse bubbling across the floor. So all things considered——"

Farnberg took a pace forward.

"Is that what you think? Well, let me tell you——"

"Farnberg!" Friste's bleat cut in shakily. "Wait a minute. If anyone knows where he is——"

The gunman's lips curled.

"Aw, hell! I'll soon find a way of fixing that."

"I doubt it," said the Saint.

And then he took the chance that he had been manoeuvring for.

As he backed away, with Farnberg following him, it had so

happened that Farnberg completely covered him from Friste's potential line of fire. And Farnberg's attention was momentarily distracted.

The Saint's left hand knocked the threatening gun aside. His right hand whipped up into the gunman's unprotected jaw, and Farnberg's head clicked back as if his neck had been snapped at the base.

Simon stayed to do no further damage. His left hand had made one jerk at the gun, but Farnberg had held it fast. And the Saint knew that his punch had gone just one inch out of place. If it had been dead accurate, no man living could have retained any further interest for the subsequent proceedings; but even a Simon Templar, seizing one slim split second's instantaneous flicker of a chance, with an automatic pistol in the hand of a practised operator fourteen inches from his solar plexus, cannot expect to make every single stroke with infallible precision. Wherefore the Saint did not pause.

He opened the door and ducked through it, and Friste's shot splintered the glass upper panel as he did so.

The Saint took the first flight of stairs in one flying leap, rebounded from the wall of the lower landing like an india-rubber ball, and went down the second flight by way of the banisters. Above him he heard the roar of Farnberg's bull voice and the more treble yap of Friste. Their feet clattered on the stairs, and the Saint, slipping with elegant rapidity down a second stretch of banister, heard another shot plonk into the rail just behind him, and changed his style of descent abruptly.

He kept his lead to the ground floor; and then, instead of making for the front door, he spun round in his tracks as his feet left the last step, and doubled towards the back of the building.

Here was darkness, till a ray shot out from his little pocket flashlight to pierce it. He opened a door, passed through, and closed it behind him; his torch and fingers together searched swiftly for a key in the lock, or bolts anywhere, but there were none.

"Now that," said the Saint, "is a nuisance."

He had decided against the front door without a second's hesitation, for he had no overpowering ambition to sprint down two hundred yards of straight street with one very expert shot and one unknown quantity popping bullets at him. And he knew to one millionth part of a hair's breadth how flimsy was the bluff that he had put up to discourage that possibility. It hadn't really been a serious at-

tempt at all—it had been nothing but a minor flourish with the object of gaining time and creating a slight dissension among the battalions of the wicked. Which purpose it had served—and that was all.

He flashed a glance round the barely furnished room. There were a table, a couple of chairs, and precious little else. The Saint heaved those three items of furniture against the door and made for the window.

This did not appear to have been opened since the day when it was first installed—both upper and lower sashes resisted his efforts. And at that moment Farnberg crashed against the slenderly barricaded door.

A small cupboard stood under the window. The Saint snatched it up in his two hands and hurled it bodily through the glass. It left a wide jagged hole which he had no time to negotiate carefully. He stepped back four paces, took a short run, and launched himself through it horizontally, in a high flat dive.

As he went through it, he hear the items of furniture collapse before Farnberg's terrific onslaught.

Then the waters of the river engulfed him with a mighty splash.

He came up for a breath and dived again, this time like a porpoise. He swam a dozen yards under water, and let himself rise again gently. Even so, a shot plopped into the water a moment after his head broke the surface. He dived again, changing his direction, and heard the muffled sounds of further shooting as he went down; but there was no more of it when he came up again.

He paddled silently along in the deep shadows under the walls of the buildings that came right down to the water's edge. Presently a little jetty loomed up ahead of him. He turned alongside it, and a few seconds later he was pulling himself over the stern of the light electric launch that he had parked there the previous evening to await his need.

As he started it up, he heard the engine of a River Police launch chattering officiously over the dark stream, and a spotlight wabbled along the line of warehouses and picked up the face of Reginald Friste framed in the broken window. Simon heard the shouted question, and the word "burglar," among others, in reply; and he was smiling serenely as he let in the clutch and was borne swiftly and soundlessly up the stream.

Patricia Holm carried the bowl of bronze chrysanthemums from the sideboard to the window seat to give the blossoms a sunbath.

The Saint, who was also taking a sunbath, turned his head.

"It dawns upon me," he said, "that we are stagnating rapidly. For a whole fortnight I have done nothing either desperately wicked or stickily virtuous. Also, I have run out of cigarettes. And the thought of having to walk two hundred yards to the nearest tobacconist's makes me want to burst into tears."

Patricia handed him a case of dainty white cylinders tipped with rose leaves. The Saint took one, lighted it and shuddered faintly; and his lady regarded him with indignation.

"What's the matter with them?" she demanded.

"Probably, like barley water and spats, they're an acquired taste," said the Saint. "They have one good point—a seductive element of doubt. Is the flavour vanilla, or just mulligatawny with a dash of scented hair oil?"

Patricia detached the abomination from his fingers and sat on the arm of his chair.

"What are you going to do, lad?"

"Blowed if I know," said the Saint gloomily. "Of course, I could always murder a bishop. I could bring you his scalp, and you could use it to trim your new coat—the one that looks as if we'd found a way of using up last year's eiderdowns. But I have a dreadful feeling that bishops are mostly bald. Can you think of a bishop with a really luxuriant growth?"

"Ass!" said Patricia; and kissed him.

The Saint gazed through the brightly curtained windows at the charmingly sunlit scenery of Upper Berkeley Mews. From the middle distance came the swishing and whoofling sounds of the morning wash and brush-up parade. Invisible taxis honked and spluttered in the adjacent streets, but in the quiet backwater of Upper Berkeley Mews brooded an atmosphere of autumn calm.

And then into the peace and quiet burst the rattle of an intruding taxi. It stopped just beyond the open windows; and the Saint, leaning forward, saw the man who alighted from it and groaned.

"Gawd!" said the Saint sepul- door to him, sweethe..rt, and is paying us a visit. Open the chrally. "Our one and only Teal brain him with the hat rack if you get a chance. Maybe he's got some decent cigarettes on him."

Patricia departed; and the Saint put his feet on the window-sill and closed his eyes. He was in that position when Chief Inspector Teal came in.

"Good-morning," said Teal; and the Saint opened one eye and focussed his visitor.

"It was," he agreed wearily, and closed the eye again. "Have

you got a cigarette?"

"I haven't," he said.

"That makes you, if possible, even more unwelcome," said the Saint. "You'll probably be murdered before you leave—we were just looking around for someone to kill. Pat, where are your manners? Pass Claud Eustace the garbage tubes."

Patricia obeyed; and Teal took one look at the offering and declined gracefully.

"Beer, then?" said the Saint

"If you'll excuse me," said Teal, "fat men hadn't ought to drink."

"Teal," said the Saint wearily, "if you were a blanket, you'd be the wettest thing that ever happened. But if you'll allow me——"

He proceeded to the barrel in the corner, filled a tankard, and returned to his chair.

"Now what's the worry?"

"What are you doing these days, Saint?"

"To the most casual observer," said the Saint, "it should be obvious that I'm winding up the parish clock."

"Oh, stop it."

"Sorry," said the Saint, "I can't. I'm employed to wind it up."

"Been getting into any trouble lately, Saint?"

Simon appeared to consider the point carefully.

"Not that I can remember," he said at length. "Of course, I may have bumped somebody off in my sleep. Or do you mean something else? There was a little blonde I met the other night——"

Teal unwrapped a wafer of Mr. Wrigley's unrivalled jaw exerciser, and engulfed it ponderously.

"I was thinking maybe you'd have something helpful to say about that Gaydon's Wharf case," he said.

"Don't," said the Saint sympathetically. "I'm not well enough. I don't want any of those Sherlock Holmes stunts, my dear Watson. They're dead as the dodo. You found a cigarette coupon rolled up and concealed in the murdered man's left ear. If he had collected five hundred of them, he would have obtained a pair of fish knives and a sardine opener. From this we deduce that the murdered man was fond of fish. Therefore the man whose hatred he had aroused was the local butcher. Arrest the butcher, and the thing's done. Next case, please."

Teal looked at him.

"Suppose you come along and talk down at my office," he suggested; and the Saint sighed.

"Is this another arrest?" he inquired.

"Not yet," said Teal ominously.

The Saint drank deeply.

"Then we'll hear your trouble now," he said. "I'll come for a walk with you later, if it sounds interesting enough."

Teal nodded slowly and masticated in silence for some moments. Then again he turned his round, red face towards the Saint.

"Have you been lying low because you knew Duncarry was over here?"

"Nope. That hatchet-faced New York sleuth and I have entombed the tomahawk."

"I wondered," said Teal. "Somehow, we got discussing you."

"And what did you hear?"

"Nothing against you," said Teal, almost regretfully. "He doesn't seem to bear any malice. He asked me to get hold of you and give you a message."

"I'll hear it."

"Duncarry said: 'Break the glad news to that reformed and Saintly guy. Give him a big earful of the joyous tidings that Jack Farnberg has busted his corral and is rampaging around somewhere on this side with his warpaint on and feathers in his hair.' But what he meant was——"

"I know the language," murmured the Saint mildly. "Did you think you were the only man in London who went to the movies? But what's that got to do with anything?"

"I just thought you might be interested," said Teal. "Also, that's another matter you might be able to help me over. We're looking for Farnberg—we don't want him over here. And as soon as he's found he's going to be put on the first boat and shipped back to his home town. Duncarry had an idea that you'd be the first person Farnberg would want to see on this side."

"But not to give me his love and kisses," drawled the Saint. "Sure—I understand. And if Jack comes beetling in here, all hung around with howitzers, you want me to collect him and pass him along to the Export Department."

"I'd be obliged if you would," Teal admitted. "But that's nothing to do with the Gaydon's Wharf business. Now, look here, Templar——"

"Shoot."

"I don't mind telling you that's stumped me. It's stumped every single man at the Yard. A man shot dead in a room that no one could possibly have got into, and no trace of a weapon. We aren't miracle men, and it just occurred to me——"

"That I might have one of my brilliant inspirations?"

"That's about the strength of it." Teal regarded the Saint seriously. "If you're at a loose end——"

The Saint stroked his chin, and slowly a light dawned in his eyes.

"It's an idea," he murmured.

Then he stood up.

"Teal, it's the hell of an idea! I shouldn't think you'll have another idea like that in the next thirty years—with a brain like yours."

"You'll see what you can do?"

"I will. For the first time in his life the Saint shall hunt on the side of law and order. The coruscations of his astounding intellect shall dazzle the nitwits of Scotland Yard. You have only to lead me to the body.

He swung around with his quick laugh. The idea had fired his volatile brain, as the Saint's ideas always did, with a dazzling, a dancing suddenness.

"Sorry, Pat, old dear, but you'll have to wait for your bishop. Duty calls, and these lighter pastimes must wait for their turn. But if a rural dean will satisfy you until Friday—— Eyes right for a moment, Claud."

Patricia put up her mouth, and the Saint dealt with it suitably.

"The sailor's farewell to his horse. And so we pass on to the perils of our calling. O. K., Claud Eustace."

He swung himself out of the window.

"Your hat," said Patricia.

The Saint caught his head furniture.

"Thanks," he said, smiling up at her. "Don't expect me back to lunch—I have to tell Teal the stirring story of the cardinal and the pig of the aunt of the gardener."

"I haven't heard that one," said Patricia.

"Neither have I," said the Saint. "But I shall invent it as we go along. I've just woken up after a fortnight's sleep, and my brain is buzzing. So long, old darling!"

He disappeared with a gay wave of his hand; and as Teal emerged more sedately through the door, the long, lean Hirondel purred up with the Saint at the wheel.

"I seem," said the Saint, as he spun the great car into Piccadilly in his cheerfully murderous way, "I seem, Claud, to have heard that there's a fair lady floating somewhere in the background of this spot of bother."

"You've seen the newspapers?"

The Saint nodded.

"Eileen Wiltham," he said, "I presume you've inspected her?"

"I have."

"Pimples?"

"No."

"Squint?"

"No."

"Bow legs?"

"No."

"Shall I be allowed to meet her in the course of my profound investigations?"

"No."

"Teal, as a prophet you're

a bum," said the Saint happily, and concentrated on manoeuvring the car through a gap between two omnibuses that would conveniently have accommodated an emaciated visiting card.

When they arrived at Scotland Yard, Teal was greeted with a message to say that the assistant commissioner desired to converse with him, and the Saint strolled on alone to the office in which the detective was accustomed to think his great thoughts, earn a certain amount of his salary, and qualify for the pension which the patient British taxpayer would one day have to provide.

The Saint, with his hands in his pockets, kicked open the door, and then stopped on the threshold; and the lean figure of Detective Duncarry of New York City shot out of an easy chair with outstretched hand.

"Hello, Saint!"

They gripped. Once upon a time, in some gay days on the other side of the Atlantic, when the Saint had been on the run and Detective Duncarry had been doing the chasing, they had fallen down an elevator shaft together; but the smile with which the American greeted the man to whom he owed a limp that would go with him to the end of his life was innocent of all animosity.

"It's good to see you again, Saint."

"And damned good to see you," murmured Simon. "Hell—this was worth waiting for! I always had an idea I'd like to take a look at you without any artillery blocking the view."

"Have a stogie?"

Simon shook his head. He lighted a cigarette and seated himself on the desk, and for a few moments there was a reminiscent silence.

"Did you get my message?" asked the New Yorker presently.

"I did. And has any more stuff like Jack Farnberg leaked out of your tanks?"

"One or two have faded out," said Duncarry, nodding curtly. "We've been having a bit of a clean-up lately. There was some rough stuff down in Canal Street one night last month, and four of Farnberg's bunch got between the fresh air and some lead that was floating around. But Farnberg was the guy we wanted, and he was the guy we didn't get. From what trickles through he wants you like a butcher wants sheep—in the form of mutton."

The Saint grinned.

"He's not the only one," he murmured. "But he's got more reason for it than some of the others. Those were the days!"

"Is Teal coming along?"

"Some time. He's having a heart-to-heart chat with the

assistant commissioner at the moment. Let's forget him. He's all balled up with a murder case these days—spends all his waking hours on his hands and knees with a magnifying glass and a bottle of glue, looking for clues."

"He said he was going to talk to you about that."

"He has," said the Saint. "You'd better watch your step, Dun—you see in me an incipient sleuth, full of righteousness and chemical beer. Which reminds me—have you started thinking about lunch?"

"I had started," admitted Duncarry.

"Then let's go and see if we can get some poured out," said the Saint. And Duncarry intimated that the idea was O.K. with him.

Simon scribbled a message and spiked it to the desk with Teal's favourite pen. They walked round to the Victoria, and it was there that Duncarry harked back to a matter of curiosity.

"How did you come to get in trouble with Farnberg, Saint?"

"It just happened—that night in Brooklyn. He bothered me, and I had to tread on him. The trouble was that he was just going down for the third time when the raid started. Farnberg stopped a nasty one right at the beginning, and I was slightly plugged myself. I did a two-mile swim that night with a couple of bullets in me for ballast." He smiled. "There always seems to be some water around to spoil my clothes whenever I meet Jack," he said cryptically.

"Have you heard Jack's end of the story?"

"Not yet."

"His yarn is that it was a frame-up—that you just waded into him and got him mixed up and held him till the cops came in. That was the story he told the Court, and he went over the Bridge of Sighs still saying it."

"And then?"

"Ardossi worked his get-away. Where they went to nobody knows for certain, but we know they got over to Europe somehow, and I've more than a good idea that they're right here in London. That's the reason why I'm over on this side of the big pond."

"That's just your idea?"

"That's all I know so far—I've only been over a few days."

The Saint was lounging with his back to the bar, and for a moment Duncarry failed to note his sudden immobility. And then the Saint spoke again—quietly and gently.

"Then from information received," he drawled, "I can tell you that that's more than your own private hunch—it's just plain fact."

He shifted off the bar, straightening up with his most Saintly smile.

"Come right on in, Vittorio," he said clearly, and Duncarry spun round.

"What the hell——"

The Saint laughed.

"Too late, old dear," he murmured. "You missed the vision." He strolled forward and picked up a glossy silk hat, and returned with it to the bar.

"He bolted as soon as I spoke—just let go his lid and skidded for the tall timber. But if it wasn't Vittorio Ardossi himself, I'm at this moment selling fish and chips in the Commercial Road. You were dead right, son—there are some bright days coming."

He gazed thoughtfully at the swing doors through which the flying Italian had made his exit; and then, radiant again, he waved a hand to Teal, who at that moment opened them. Something in Duncarry's lean face indicated trouble, and Teal blinked at the two men speculatively.

"What's been happening?"

"Nothing much—I've just been collecting Duncarry part of his outfit for next year's Ascot."

The Saint waved the silk hat.

He up-ended the headpiece on the bar, and pencilled in the lining an artistic sketch of a little man with a circle for a head and straight lines to designate body and limbs. Above the circle he perpetrated something that might equally well have suggested a halo or a starved and suicidally minded sausage making a ferocious attack on its own tail; and Teal looked over his shoulder and watched the performance curiously.

"*Pour encourager les autres.*" The Saint extended the hat towards the barman. "Some absent-minded bird in a hurry hung this up on the carpet," he said blandly. "If he calls in to inquire about it, which is unlikely, return it to him with my compliments."

"If you have a quiet time, it isn't your fault," said Duncarry appreciatively, and the Saint grinned.

"We may yet see life," he said.

They moved on to the grill room together, and it was there, over the coffee which closed the meal, that Simon checked up what he knew of the Gaydon's Wharf murder.

"I gather," he said, "that Reginald Friste was not very nice to know. Barringer, through some oversight on the part of a deluded parent, had to tolerate him as a guardian up to the age of twenty-one, and thereafter as an infernal nuisance. Barringer, a clever lad, is an analytical chemist attached to Wiltham's Brewery for the purpose of devising fresh horrors to be inflicted on

the public in the sacred name of beer; Friste ran a shipping agency, and probably a number of less reputable organizations as well."

"All right so far," assented Teal.

"Enter," said the Saint, "the beautiful heroine, daughter of Sir Enoch Wiltham. Barringer falls. Friste also meets her, and likewise drops with a sickening thud. Friste is wealthy, and Barringer is not, but heroine nobly refuses to be influenced by bank balance. Icy optic for Friste, glad and merry one for Ballinger. Joy and black jealousy. Register some black jealousy, Teal."

"I'd like to register you a black eye," sighed the long-suffering detective.

"The melodrama," continued the Saint, unmoved, "follows rapidly. Friste visits heroine, proposes for the umpteenth time, and is turned down. Friste utters some unseemly language, makes threats of hideous vengeance, and exit. Red fire at back of stage, and muffled drums and popping of beer corks off."

Teal slewed his wad of chewing gum to the westward and nodded again.

"Then?"

"Barringer hears of scene, visits Friste, and threatens to beat him up if he comes within ten miles of the girl again. Barringer has incidentally discovered a new method of producing commercial alcohol at one third the cost of the cheapest present process. Roseate gleams of dollars on the horizon. Hopes of wedding bells and cottage with roses round the door and garage for two-seaters. Is that right?"

"It's good enough."

"Then the dreadful scene. Subtitle: *Came the Dawn* . . . . . Friste's staff, after waiting two hours for their boss, endeavour to enter his private office, to obtain urgently needed papers. It is discovered to be locked—an unprecedented occurrence. Telephone call to Friste's house reveals that Friste did not go home the night before, and the staff, loyally dismissing all sinful possibilities from their minds, summon the police. Door burst in, and Friste found dead. Enter Chief Inspector Teal, star performer of the Criminal Investigation Department, the Man of Destiny, with a nose for murders like the nose of a china bloodhound on a mantelpiece. 'Ah-ha! Foul Play! Somebody has bumped this guy off.' Overcome with his own brilliance, Teal swallows chewing gum. S.O.S. to nearest Vet. to retrieve said gum. What next?"

"Some sense," Teal suggested reasonably.

"Then suppose you let me inspect the scene of the crime," murmured the Saint. "The great

brain shall wallow in its atmosphere, soaking up deductions like a curate absorbing ginger-beer at a parish bun fight. I was wrong, Teal—this sleuthing business is Big Stuff. Where's my violin? ... Waiter!"

"The man who called this place Gaydon's Wharf," said the Saint, "had a cockeyed sense of humour."

There was certainly nothing hilarious about the place. The three-storied building had almost certainly started its life as a warehouse, but had later been converted into three floors of dingy offices. Friste's office had been on the second floor, and the Saint appeared to grow slightly perplexed as he climbed the dark, narrow staircase.

"If Friste was a man of all this wealth," he remarked, "why did he want to choose a hole like this for his office?"

"Possibly he thought it would be convenient for the docks," said Teal. "If you'd thought of that question before he was killed, I could have asked him."

The entrance to the office was secured with a padlock and chain, and a constable stood on guard outside. The Saint lingered to light a cigarette while Teal produced a key and removed the obstruction. They passed into a large bare room principally furnished with three desks supporting three shrouded typewriters. It was divided approximately into two equal areas by a counter which confronted the visitor on entering. On the right there were two doors, one on either side of the counter. Teal opened the nearest one, and they passed into Friste's private office.

"There are only these two rooms," he explained.

The Saint glanced interestedly around the inner sanctum. Near the centre of the room was a large, flat-topped desk; there were a filing cabinet, two armchairs, and a small table in one corner.

"How does it strike you?" asked Teal.

"Hideously," said the Saint. "That wall paper——"

Teal scowled.

"Do you intend to try to be helpful, or don't you?"

"I will do my wonderful best," said the Saint modestly.

He drifted round the room in a cloud of cigarette smoke. The single window interested him. Looking out, he found that the wall in which it was set ran sheer down to the river. The face of the building, on that side at least, would have provided no foothold for anything but an athletic fly.

"How was this window fixed when the police came in?"

"It was open about nine inches at the bottom."

"And Exhibit B?" The Saint pointed to a long pole, feebly resembling a boat hook, which lay on the floor close by.

"That's exactly as we found it. It was used to open and close the upper sash."

"And the deceased?"

"He was lying in a line between the window and the centre of the room, on his back, about six feet from the window."

"How was he shot?"

"Through the centre of the forehead—from a range of about two inches."

"And the doors?"

"Both locked, as I told you. They're Yale locks, and there was absolutely no trace of them having been tampered with. Of course, if they had been unlocked when the murderer arrived, he could have slipped the catches and made them lock behind him as he went out."

"I see that there's a third door," said the Saint, pointing to the wall opposite the window.

"That's a private entrance from the landing. Friste could go in or out without passing through the reception room. But if you'll look carefully you'll see that that door is bolted on the inside, and it was like that when we found it. It's the one door which the murderer couldn't possibly have used.

The Saint paced the room in silence for a few moments.

Then he said: "What about the office staff?"

"Their alibis are cast iron," replied the detective. "There were two girl stenographers and a young clerk. On this particular morning the girls arrived together, and the clerk came in about five minutes later. Not one of them was out of sight of somebody for one second, and there's no possibility of suspecting anyone. But there's one thing you haven't read in the newspapers."

"What's that?"

"The porter downstairs saw Friste come in at ten o'clock, yet he never passed through the outer office. Friste was alive and well at ten o'clock. He must have let himself in by his private entrance and bolted the door behind him. And shortly after that he was shot dead, but there were three people waiting for him in the outer room who never heard the shot that killed him."

The Saint frowned.

"There certainly seem to be some difficulties about this case," he murmured, and Teal exploded.

"Difficulties! I tell you, when you've sweated your brain over the case as long as I have, you'll see that it's not only difficult—it's impossible! Nobody could have gone into that office by the private entrance, because it was

bolted on the inside. No one can have gone in through the outer office, because the staff would have seen him. No one can have got in through the window, because it's humanly impossible to get at that window except by a rope lowered from the roof. And that rope would have to pass right in front of a similar window in the offices above, where there were whole staffs working at the time. Besides, if anyone opened or closed that window on the outside, he managed to do it without disturbing one particle of dust—and the outside of the frame's thick with it. If someone sat outside that window, somehow, and potted Friste through that nine-inch opening at the bottom, I'd like to know how Friste got his head down to that level, even if he was using the pole to try and open the upper sash. If you tell me that someone tied a revolver to a long pole and pushed it across the river from a building on the other side, and Friste obligingly put his head against the gun, I shall have you arrested."

The Saint sighed.

"It certainly is difficult," he repeated.

He knelt beside the window and examined the inside of the sill.

"There's a tiny mark here," he said. "Looks as if it had had a bang."

Teal and Duncarry came up to inspect the discovery, but the Saint sauntered off and lighted another cigarette. He was stretched out in one of the armchairs, apparently asleep, when Teal rose to his feet again.

"Does it mean anything to you, Templar?"

The Saint roused aggrievedly.

"Not yet," he said. "But I thought it might mean something to you. Anyway, you can call it a clue, and tell the newspapers about it."

He stretched up out of his chair, yawning, and then he suddenly stiffened.

"Where is the dragon?" he asked, and Teal stared.

"What dragon?"

The Saint gazed at him with a slow smile.

"If you don't know anything about the dragon I'm not going to tell you. But that dragon is a good joke. Remember to ask me about it later." The Saint yawned again. "And now I'm tired of this case. Also, I require some beer."

He faded away abruptly, and the disgruntled detective followed with Duncarry. The Saint decanted them in Whitehall, told them to be good boys and to take care not to get brain fever, and headed the car towards home after extracting Eileen Wiltham's address.

As it happened, this was a pre-

caution that he need not have taken.

"Pat," said the Saint, as Patricia opened the door to him, "I have sad news. I've just been out with a bloke whose literary tastes include parish magazines, and he tells me that our chosen bishop has had his hair cut. Now we shall have to wait until it grows again, or that scalp I promised you will look moth-eaten."

"There's someone here to see you," said Patricia. "I thought it might save you some trouble if I raked her up."

Simon gazed at her with admiration.

"Eileen herself? Pat, you're a genius."

He went through into the sitting room, and a tall, pale girl, who had been occupying his favourite chair, rose as he entered.

"Pleased to meet you, Eileen," said the Saint briskly. "And you're pleased to meet me. Splendid. Have some beer?"

Eileen Wiltham smiled.

"I'm not sure why Miss Holm should have fetched me——"

"Nor am I, unfortunately," said the Saint. "But if you can tell me anything interesting, or let me know anything I can do——"

He offered his cigarette case, lighted a cigarette for himself, and seated himself on the table.

"I didn't know you worked with the police," said the girl.

"Nor did I," said Simon cheerfully. "In fact, this is a record."

"I've read about you, of course——"

"Then you know my sticky reputation."

"You were pardoned some time ago."

"Some of my sins have certainly been forgiven," admitted the Saint largely. "The process of reformation continues, but very slowly. Now tell me your worry."

"It's not about myself," said the girl after a pause. "But my fiancé Charles Barringer. Since I'm here, can you tell me why he's being followed about wherever he goes?"

"Teal's faithful hounds." The Saint chuckled. "But I don't see what I can do about that. If I gave them a clip under the ear and ordered them back to barracks, they mightn't consider that the orders came from an authoritative source."

"But do they really believe that he committed that murder?"

The Saint looked at her for a moment before replying. She was undeniably pretty, but the strain and worry of the last few days showed in her face.

"It wouldn't be fair to deny that there are temporary suspicions," he said seriously. "Consider the facts. After Friste had made a nuisance of himself with you, your boy went round to his

office and bawled him out. He threatened to murder him if the offense was repeated, and he fired off all this stuff in the hearing of Friste's entire staff. That same evening, before the office closed, Friste went out and had a number of drinks at a neighbouring pub and repeated the whole story of the row to anyone who'd listen. He was rather a heavy drinker, but thoroughly booze-proof, and the landlord of the pub swears that he's never seen the little rat the worse for it. Then Friste went back to his office as the staff was closing up, and the next morning he was shot."

"Yes, but—"

"The porter saw him come in at about ten o'clock, but his staff never saw him. Therefore he went into his private office by the other door. No one came through the outer office, and therefore the only man who could have shot him also entered by the private door. And your fiancé had a key to that door."

"But that door was bolted on the inside," Patricia put in. "So the man couldn't have gotten out that way."

"I know. And yet he didn't go through the outer office, because he would have been seen. He might have dived straight from the window into the river, but I doubt it. The whole show is one of the most frantic mysteries of this bleary age. Teal did the best thing he could think of when he pinched your fiancé. But he had to let him go almost at once."

"Then why are they still shadowing him?" asked the girl helplessly.

"It's the system. It's vaguely possible that he might have killed Friste, though no one can think out how he could have done it. Teal had to let him go for the time being when your revered parent butted in and cemented his alibi."

"But Charles couldn't have done it! He was staying with us that night."

"I know that, too. And your house is at Cookham, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Until after midnight he was discussing the development of his invention with your father—then some more drinks and smokes, and so to bed. That was the night of the murder. According to the processes of Teal's apology for a brain, Charles might have crept out later and borrowed your father's car to get to London and do the job. But if he did that, he also did big things in the wash and polish line afterwards, for it was a filthy night, and the car was clean when he drove back to London in it with your father and found Teal sitting on his bed with a welcoming smile and a pair of handcuffs. He might have used

a car from a neighbouring garage, but the inquiries that have been made seem to rule that out. He might even have used a push-bike."

"But at ten o'clock he was having breakfast with us."

The Saint nodded.

"Exactly. The whole thing is quite impossible; but it's also impossible that anyone else could have killed Friste."

Eileen Wiltham raised her eyebrows wearily.

"I don't see it. If everyone thinks that Charles couldn't possibly have done it——"

"The snag," said the Saint, "is that Teal isn't quite sure about the authenticity of the Reginald Friste whom the door porter saw alive and well at ten o'clock."

"What do you mean?"

The Saint shook his head and shrugged. He tried to explain the methods of Scotland Yard when investigating an apparently impossible crime, but it was a difficult and unwelcome task. When he found that he could give Eileen Wiltham no useful help or information of any kind, he changed the subject and tried to sidetrack her mind from it; and when, later, Patricia reminded him that they were invited to fill the Hannassays' box at the Gaiety, he thought he had an inspiration.

"Take Eileen instead," he said. "Kit and Susan won't mind, and it'll do her good."

But the girl shook her head.

"I'd love to go, but I promised to go to a show with Charles."

"When are you meeting him?"

"At a quarter past eight."

"Then you can go to the preliminary dinner," said the Saint. "They're good and cheery souls, and just now I think the best thing you can do is to jump at anything that'll stop you from thinking too much. Pat, you might get on to Susan and give them due warning. Make my excuses also—I'm afraid I shouldn't have been able to go, anyway. I think to-night is going to be a busy night."

He overruled all protests, and at seven o'clock he drove Patricia and Eileen to the Hannassay's house in Hamilton Place.

And from Hamilton Place he proceeded along to the Victoria. He paused briefly at the door, where he received some interesting information; and then, continuing his researches further, he found Duncarry in the grill room, lingering over a menu. The New Yorker offered the glad hand.

"If you've nothing better to do, Dun," said the Saint, "you might join up with me. I'm alone."

"I'm not feeling any too crowded myself," Duncarry confessed. "You've leaped down like a little ray of sunshine out of a dark sky. London can be a

darned lonesome place."

"Got a gun?"

Duncarry did not blink an eyelid at this odd question, but shook his head and plumped for smoked salmon.

"Pack this then," said the Saint, pushing an automatic pistol under the table.

"What's the idea?"

"Vittorio has collected his hat," said the Saint cheerfully. "When he and Jack Farnberg get together to admire the drawing I left in the lining, there will be vitriol in the air. Unless my prophetic powers are getting as punk as Claud Eustace Teal's, we shall see fun and games before to-night is out. What do you say we burst a bottle?"

Duncarry examined the automatic more closely when they got to Upper Berkeley Mews.

"Looks useful," he remarked. "That's a neat little silencer."

"German. Did I hear you say one time that Jack Farnberg and Vittorio Ardossi are wandering around together lovingly hand in hand?"

Duncarry wrinkled his long nose.

"Not as a great and solemn truth—only as an intelligent guess," he answered. "Ardossi was never a big cheese before his uncle made a well. Uncle had a chain of salami foundries from Minneapolis to 'Frisco. He must have been some hash slinger, believe me. There was a dandy seagoing steam yacht and a fleet of cars among the oddments."

"Sounds good." The Saint was sliding an ingenious specimen of folding steel shuttering across the windows. "Pardon these precautions, but I have a constitutional objection to spilling blood in my drawing room and you never know what some gay bird may be doing on the other side of the castle walls."

Duncarry nodded his approval.

"You certainly know how to look after yourself," he conceded.

"If I didn't, I should be ancient history," said the Saint cooly. "And, by the Lord——"

He broke off as a bell rang softly somewhere outside the room. He flicked a little automatic from his pocket and went out into the hall; and as he did so something was pushed into the letter box. The Saint looked at it for one second, and then leaped back like a cat and snatched a cone-shaped metal fire extinguisher from its bracket as he saw a speck of fire like an angry red eye glowing between the wires of the box. There was a hiss and a splashing as a jet of liquid from the extinguisher deluged the letter box and drenched the mat below in

foaming lather.

"What's happening?" asked Duncarry's voice.

"Watering the garden," replied the Saint genially, pushing the plug back into the fire extinguisher. "And now we shall have to swab up the mess. I have an idea, Duncarry, that if that guy was the postman he was doing a bit of overtime. You'd better take cover, son—maybe I haven't soaked all the spitefulness out of this kindly gift."

He opened the letter box cautiously and withdrew something hard and heavy with the charred and saturated paper wrapping still clinging to it. Duncarry shifted his cigar and peered over the Saint's shoulder. It was a flat cigarette box that had once contained fifty gaspers of a popular brand. Copper wire had been wrapped round the box from end to end, and the tails of the wire were twisted tightly together. In the centre, a scorched half-inch of cotton fuse protruded from a hole punched in the tin.

"Crude," said the Saint pleasantly, "but effective. I guess it would have made a mess of me if I'd met it in action at close quarters. Without dissecting its internals, Dun, I should diagnose a combination of high explosive and hobnails."

"More like Ardossi's visiting card than Jack Farnberg's stuff," grunted the New Yorker. "That's in exchange for the scare you gave him."

The Saint laughed and made for the kitchen in search of a mop. He found a swab and pail, and was down on his knees giving a good imitation of an industrious housemaid when he heard a hasty step outside, and the bell rang again.

The Saint pushed the pail into the fairway, leaped to his feet, and opened the door with a jerk.

The visitor, who seemed to be in a desperate hurry, rushed in, staggered over the pail, fell, and scrambled up to discover an automatic pistol levelled at him, and behind the pistol the lean face and red-tipped cigar of Detective Duncarry.

"Put 'em good and high, stranger," drawled the American "Are you claiming this bird, Saint?"

Simon smiled at the amazed and startled visitor, and shook his head.

"Hullo, Barringer," he said. I'm sorry you tripped over the ironmongery, and sorrier still that you've slopped all the juice out of it. However—take him inside and give him some beer while I clean up, Dun."

Barringer was a good-looking, upstanding young fellow of about twenty-six. He seem worried and nervous, and probably

he had reason. To be shadowed and dogged at every twist and turn by the watchful myrmidons of the law is not a stimulating tonic.

"I really can't wait, Mr. Temple. I just wanted to know—Is Eileen—is Miss Wiltham here?"

The Saint waved his swab affably to a man who was energetically ornamenting the opposite side of the Mews as a living proof of the vigilance of Scotland Yard, and shut the door.

"I'm afraid she isn't," he said, resuming his job.

"She promised to meet me at quarter-past eight."

"I know. Didn't she turn up?"

Barringer shook his head.

"I waited till nearly nine, and then took a taxi straight here."

"She has been here," said the Saint. "But she left at seven. That bit of mopping isn't bad work for an amateur, is it? Slide into the consulting room while I shift the bag of tools, and I'll be right with you. Mr. Charles Barringer, Mr. Duncarry. Barringer, Dun is the bloke who's slightly tangled up with the Gaydon's Wharf murder, that brain-racking mystery now filling Teal's head with aches and his heart with tears."

Barringer, however, refused beer and declined cigarettes. The Saint rang up Hamilton Place, and the butler informed him that the whole party, including Miss Wiltham, had left at eight o'clock in Lord Hannassay's car. This provided the sum total of the information which the Saint could give. And when Barringer heard it he apologized for intruding and took his leave.

"I should think that young fellow might kill a man in a row, but he doesn't seem the sort to lay out for one," said Duncarry, and the Saint groaned.

"Don't rack my brains. The crime is manifestly impossible, as we all know, and I refuse to burst any blood vessels over it this evening."

"Friste was a shipping agent, wasn't he? What did he ship?"

"Various things. Some of them legitimate, and some of them not. I think I told you he was a nasty man. He had one boat on the South American run. Get me? Some souls travelled to hell on that ship."

Duncarry nodded; and for some moments the Saint smoked with a thoughtful frown. And then, all at once, with one of the electric changes of mood that were so characteristic of the man, the frown vanished, and Simon sprang to his feet, smiling.

"Come on, Dun! I'm tired of this. Let's leave it to Teal and his staff of highbrow stars. That bomb stunt was probably the beginning and the end of the entertainment for to-night, so we'll go

out and be riotous. I'll take you down the Wild West End and show you some gay life."

"So long as you don't take me to a place that Teal's likely to raid——"

"I'll try to think of one of which he's a leading member," promised the Saint.

They went out with some circumspection; but the Saint's guess seemed to have been accurate, for there was no disturbance and the Mews was deserted.

On the Embankment the Saint stopped his car and got out. With the tin box in his hand he leaned against the parapet, watching the river; and then he gave the box a heave, lighted a cigarette, and went back to Detective Duncarry.

"One of my brilliant inspirations has just struck me, Dun."

The American raised inquiring eyebrows.

"Pat and Eileen have been together half the evening and our recent fake postman probably wasn't the first man to take a look at Upper Berkeley Mews. The great thought is that Jack or Vittorio, or both, who've never set eyes on Pat, though they've probably heard of her, may have got the two girls mixed. Suppose they got the great idea of grabbing Pat in the hope of getting a pull over me—it's nearly as easy to kidnap a girl in this motorcar age as to do a smash-and-grab stunt and get away with it."

"It certainly is, Saint."

"I've got no down on Eileen," said the Saint, "but still, I almost wish that's what's happened. If Jack and Vittorio have butted in and mixed their stuff, I believe I shall be able to view even that Gaydon's Wharf murder without feeling seasick."

It was half-past eleven when Patricia Holm arrived with Lady Susan Hannassay and her party at the club that the Saint had selected. They were greeted with the edifying spectacle of Simon Templar seated on the back of a chair playing a banjo, while Detective Duncarry, in spite of his limp, was dancing to the melody and at the same time balancing a champagne bottle on his head. While the dancer was receiving his mead of applause the Saint spoke to Patricia.

"At what time did Eileen leave you?"

"About ten-past eight, I think—we dropped her at Piccadilly Circus. Why?"

"She missed her boy, somehow. Barringer has been round with his hair on end. He waited for her till nearly nine, and then came along to see if she was still with you."

Patricia looked at him anxiously.

"What do you think has hap-

pened?"

"I've got a very good idea," said the Saint rather grimly. And so have you, lass. But at the moment there's just nothing we can do. We haven't a clue in the wide world. Of course, Barringer may have located her since——"

He shrugged. As a matter of fact, the problem was plaguing him, and only the sober knowledge of his own helplessness kept him in exasperated inaction.

The club band was taking a breather, and the Saint resumed his strumming on the borrowed banjo as if no such joy-shattering nuisances as Gaydon's Wharf murders, infernal machines thrust into letter boxes, and blood-thirsty gunmen had any existence in a glad world.

He raised his cheerful voice and continued with his self-appointed task of entertaining the assembled company:

"Dearest, the jaunt is over,
Ended the jag divine;
You must go back to your wife,
I must go back to mine——"

"Zoom! Boom! Ta-ra-ra!" aided and abetted Detective Duncarry with enthusiasm.

A waiter approached and whispered something in the Saint's ear.

"Spill the rest for yourself, Dun, and get yourself hated," said the Saint, saddling the American with the instrument of torture. "There's an infuriated laundress outside flourishing a club and my unpaid washing bill."

He went through into the vestibule and greeted Charles Barringer blithely.

"I came here because I found this address in my pocket, Mr. Templar," he said, holding out a scrap of paper.

"Sure. I put it there for you to find. So you haven't found Eileen yet?"

"I haven't."

"Have you mentioned her disappearance to the sleuth from Scotland Yard who's been watching over your welfare?"

Charles Barringer shook his head hopelessly. He looked strained and worried beyond his years; and suddenly the Saint gripped him by the shoulders, swung him round, and looked long and searchingly into his troubled brown eyes.

"Son," he said, "don't be too sure that you're desperately wanted for killing Friste, because it isn't true. I can't deny that Teal's alleged brain is running that way, but mine isn't. And I'm also on the job, and I have a very good reason for knowing that you didn't do it."

He smiled encouragingly.

"Keep the stiff upper lip, old chap. If you like to hang around

here a few minutes longer, I'll get on the phone to Teal right away and tell him all about it. I'd toddle off with you myself, but I can't abandon Duncarry, who's getting happy and ready and willing to play the superb ass. If you like, I'll fetch in your bloodhound as well, or he'll be getting nervous. I promise you the poor boob isn't the man-eating horror you think he is, and you may get quite sociable over a smoke and a glass of beer. He's only holding down his job."

"It's a dirty job," said the boy bitterly. "Why don't they arrest me again, and get it over?"

The Saint hitched his shoulders.

"Search me. The intricacies of British law are beyond me. Leave it to Teal, and I'll collect the sleuth."

Simon moved on past the doorkeeper and beckoned the plainclothes man across the road.

"Two friends of mine," he said to the suspicious waiter. "Supply them with beer and cigarettes, and add the debt with Mr. Duncarry's to my death warrant."

"Mr. Duncarry has just ordered a magnum of champagne, sir."

"He would," said the Saint mournfully. "If I'd had any sense, I'd have made him a member for half a guinea and entitled him to pay for himself."

He went to the telephone and asked for Teal's private number. By this time Chief Inspector Teal should either have retired to bed or have been seated at the domestic fireside listening to the radio and putting innumerable threepences into the pockets of Mr. Wrigley's shareholders. The latter guess appeared to hit the bull's-eye, for Teal himself answered the call promptly.

"Oh, you," he said, almost with a moan. "Oh, damn!"

"Glad you're sitting up and taking notice, dear old Antipon. Eileen Wiltham has faded into the great unknown, so you'd better shed those carpet slippers and get busy. I'm at the Jericho with Duncarry, who's full of pep. Gin and pep."

"What the—— What's this about the Wiltham girl?" asked Teal sourly.

"I'm only guessing," said the Saint, who was also hoping it with considerable horsepower, "but I've got a hunch that my loving pals Jack Farnberg and Vittorio Ardossi have mixed her up with Pat. Get on the job, old dear."

Mr. Teal breathed so hard that the Saint almost fancied he could smell peppermint, and hung up the receiver. Simon grinned gently. He was practically certain now that his guess

had been correct, and, with certain humane reservations, he welcomed the idea. Commonplace crimes like the Gaydon's Wharf murder mystery had a very transient appeal for him, and the idea of inviting Teal's assistance against Farnberg and Ardossi over a strictly personal slab of hatred would have made him laugh; but if Farnberg and Ardossi had been insane enough to entangle themselves in the Gaydon's Wharf affair, the resulting developments might have their entertaining angles.

"You can push on now, Charles," he said, returning to the vestibule. "I've started things moving, so don't be too anxious about your beloved. Good-night, son."

A couple of hours later the Saint gathered up the wreckage of Detective Duncarry, conveyed it forth into the night, and handed it over to the porter of the American's hotel. He went down the steps again to his car, fresh and smiling; and at that moment another car purred into the quiet square and pulled up within a yard of his own tail light.

The chauffeur jumped down to open the door, and the passenger stepped out. The fur collar of his overcoat rose above his ear tips, and from under a glassy silk hat a sallow face peered out through gold-rimmed glasses. Even so, Simon recognized him at once.

"I'll telephone when I want you again."

"Thank you, sir. Good-night, sir."

Simon felt inclined to burst into song. This sort of thing smithereened all Teal's cautious ideas and painstaking methods of forging the chain link by link and ratting after his man from hole to hole. It was pure unadulterated luck, of course, but it was so.

"Welcome, Vittorio *mio,*" cried the Saint with extended arms. "Why did you run so fast when I last saw you? And why didn't you inform the police of your address? You may be a proud American citizen, but you're an alien over here, my pet, and the police may jug you for it. Hadn't I better come in and explain the law?"

Ardossi began to protest, but the Saint shepherded him irresistibly up the steps.

"What's Mr. Duncarry's number?" he asked the night porter.

"Twenty-eight, sir."

The little hotel in a quiet corner of Elmbury Square suited Detective Duncarry's pocket, but it was not the kind of place for a recently fledged plutocrat like Ardossi to select unless he felt that it might be unhealthy to be too much in the limelight. There was no lift. The Saint fol-

lowed Ardossi up the stairs and patted him tenderly about the person for any hard bulge suggestive of a hidden weapon.

Ardossi's room was on the second floor, and the lights went up in his sitting room as he unlocked the door. The room looked comfortable enough but slightly dingy.

"Lead on, little one," said the Saint persuasively. "I want to inspect the rest of your dovecote."

The Italian, finding that his protests were ignored, obeyed meekly enough. A small bedroom adjoined the sitting room, and beyond that was the bathroom. They returned when the Saint was satisfied with his tour of inspection.

"A jolly-looking overcoat, Vittorio," commented the Saint critically, as Ardossi divested himself of that expensive garment and removed his gloves. "These are happy days."

Ardossi sat down without removing his glossy hat. In the centre of his shirt front was a fine pink pearl, and he spread out his hands with an opulent sparkle of diamond rings.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Not much, Vittorio—only the lady you kidnapped. Funny thing to want, isn't it? But I want it very much, so don't let's have any trouble. Open your mouth and wag your chin, sweetheart, or I'll start at your ears and peel the hide off you in strips."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Ardossi sighed. The Saint was expecting him to lie and keep on lying, but there were certain methods of overcoming such trifling difficulties. Simon took out his cigarette case and lighted a cigarette as if he had all the time in the world to spare. Then his unfriendly gaze returned again to the Italian.

"You're not so bat-eyed as all that," he said. "Jack up those glasses, and let's have a look at you."

The glasses went, revealing the Italian's eyes, black as sloes and unwinking.

"What's the game over here, Vittorio?"

The Italian gave the ghost of a smile.

"The same game, Mr. Templar."

"Running in with Jack Farnberg now?"

Ardossi shook his head.

"I haven't seen Jack Farnberg for two years. Not since the cops got him."

The Saint's blue eyes seemed to grow even lazier.

"Is that so? . . . Vittorio, you'd lie the legs off a full-grown elephant! I think it's time for us to take a little walk, and if I catch you telling any more lies about

Jack Farnberg I'll be damned sure you're lying about the lady, and by the time I've finished with you every bone in your body will be softer than five cents' worth of vaseline in a heat wave."

Detective Duncarry had certainly revelled; but he had a tough head, and the Saint hoped to find him not absolutely dead to the world. He took the Italian firmly by the scruff of the neck and jerked him out of the chair; and a glint of fear came into the man's beady eyes at last.

"Where are you taking me?"

"You sing when I tell you to sing," instructed the Saint curtly.

He led Ardossi along the dimly lighted corridor and on to the second flight of stairs. Halfway up Ardossi stumbled, and as he fell his right hand closed on a loose brass stair rod and wrenched it away. The savage sidelong lunge which he made with it would have spiked the Saint from eye socket to occiput if the Saint had not seen the yellow gleam of the polished rod in the very nick of time and jumped back. But in avoiding the thrust he was compelled to release his prisoner, and like a leaping puma, his mouth open and his white teeth showing, the Italian turned and slashed a second vicious blow at him.

The rod scraped the wall, and that took some of the sting out of it, but it paralyzed the Saint's arm, and the automatic he had whipped from his pocket slipped from his fingers. He aimed an upward kick at Ardossi, but it was inches short, for the Italian went over the banisters like a monkey, and the left-handed blow that Simon slatted down at him with the stair rod he had abandoned only dented the silk hat and forced it down more firmly on the sleek black head.

Simon picked up his automatic again. He could have dropped Ardossi as he ran, but he thought it wiser not to make a sticky mess of the Italian in a peaceful London hotel, for the resulting complications might be tiresome.

Ardossi sprinted for his sitting room. He had trouble with the door, which had locked itself behind them as they came out, and if the trouble had occupied him another two seconds the Saint's grip would have been on his collar. He kicked the door to behind him, but Simon sliced the stair rod in between lock and catch and kept it from fastening. The Saint knew that Ardossi would have no qualms about splashing gun lead around, but he took a chance on that and barged in. The sitting room was empty, and it offered no hiding place, but the bedroom door was closed.

The Saint put his shoulder to the door and made the flimsy bolt look like a bent pin; but that room also was empty. And although the bed looked innocent he stabbed the stair rod into it without eliciting a squeal.

The bathroom was also empty; but the window was open, and the Saint peered out into the gloom. A corkscrew staircase, a way of escape from fire for the tenants of loftier bedrooms, twisted down and slanted away from the bathroom. If Ardossi had jumped the wide gap from sill to staircase, the Saint figured he must have been a world-beater at the jumping game. He looked down and saw a small balcony below him, and a thin stream of light. Lower down still, and too far to drop without inviting the aid of a surgeon to do something with splints and bandages, was a square paved yard. Then he saw something else and cursed gently.

A rope dangled from a staple hammered into the brick wall under the sill, and its lower end might have been tied to the fire escape and cast loose when Ardossi had clawed his way across. Or the Italian might have slid down to the balcony and made the drop into the yard from there.

The life had returned to Simon's right arm, and he swung himself over the sill in pursuit with no uncertain enthusiasm. He was a third of the way down the rope when something whipped out of the darkness from the spiral staircase and clattered against the brickwork. The Saint came down with a run and crashed into the balcony, and a knife with a broken point rebounded from the wall and fell into the yard.

Simon remained just where he had fallen, crouching on hands and knees and glad to feel that Ardossi was without a gun. He reckoned himself anyone's equal at the knife-throwing game, but although the hilt of Belle was between his fingertips, he could see nothing upon which to use her. After a moment he glanced round at the window behind him, and then he could not repress a grin at what he saw between a gap in the curtains.

Obviously the night porter had blundered, and Duncarry's number was not twenty-eight. For there inside Simon saw the American himself, who had apparently gone to sleep in his chair after shedding his overcoat and one shoe.

The hammering of knuckles on the pane shook the drowsiness out of Duncarry's eyes, and he saw the Saint's features through the glass. He shot back the catch and raised the window, and the Saint jumped in.

"Ardossi himself," said the Saint briskly. "He may have shunted up the fire escape and be prancing about on some distant roof by this time, or he may not. Get your gun, and watch for me from here, Dun."

"Sure," said Duncarry as unconcernedly as though he had been asked for a match.

The Saint ran down the stairs and through the hall, where the night porter was nodding in a chair, and took cover in the shelter of a pillar at the end of the steps. His hunch was that the Italian had not lingered on the fire escape for the mere pleasure of slinging a knife at him, but was waiting for some further incident—possibly the arrival of Jack Farnberg himself.

And the Saint was right, for within thirty seconds he saw Ardossi again, sidling round from the side entrance.

Suddenly the Italian darted into the road. Expecting that he would try to climb the railings and vanish into the obscurity of the gardens, the Saint chanced the wrath of Scotland Yard and all the vials of fury that might be poured hissing hot upon his head and fired low. Ardossi squealed, rocked on one leg, and tumbled into the gutter, and his silk hat rolled off.

Then the headlights flashed, and a car turned into the square. The Saint took one look at the blue-black object that protruded from a window of the car, and dropped flat on the muddy pavement. The next moment a stammer of shots turned the silent square into a clamour of noise. The door behind the Saint opened, someone grunted throatily, and the night porter came rolling down the steps and lay still at the bottom, gazing up glassy-eyed at the dark drizzling sky.

Rising on one knee, the Saint emptied his automatic at the tires of the retreating car, but it turned the next corner on two wheels, and the only souvenir that remained was a flattened silk hat.

Windows were open and police whistles were shrilling.

The Saint bent over the night porter, saw that he was beyond human help, and ran up the steps to meet Duncarry. The New Yorker was still minus one shoe, and his left trouser leg, pulled up to the knee, revealed a silk sock anchored by a sock-suspender of dazzling blue embroidered with golden rosebuds.

"I heard the fireworks," he said. "Am I too late?"

"Sorry—you are." The Saint clapped him on the shoulder. "And I really think this is the end of to-night's festival. So you can pull down the shutters on that leg and find your other shoe."

"Did you get him?" asked the American with a yawn.

"I don't know. He squealed and dropped, but that may have been a bluff. Then a car came, and they lifted him in. I couldn't see who was working the machine gun, but I'll bet ready money it was Jack Farnberg. Vittorio's certainly unlucky with tall hats—this is the second time he's been stung."

In spite of the late hour a crowd was already gathering in the square and the police were arriving thick and fast. The Saint paused to give the police sergeant the number of the car, and spent some time answering questions before Duncarry was able to secure his release.

They went back to the American's room at last. Duncarry dispensed whisky, and the Saint gazed at his gun moodily.

"I never was the hell of a shot with these things," he said. "Next time I get a sight of either of those bright lads, I'll use my knife or my bare hands—and when that day comes, Dun, you're going to see something you can take home and tell the children. And the day is coming soon!"

AMAZING BATTLE IN LONDON SQUARE
NIGHT PORTER SHOT DEAD
MACHINE GUNS AND REVOLVERS

The Saint had no more than glanced at the headlines in the newspaper, for he was not curious to know what the press had made of the little carnival in Elmbury Square in the early hours of that morning.

After that casual glance he dropped the newspaper into the waste paper basket and made for the bathroom in his dressing gown and slippers. He had risen towards noon, as was his pleasant custom, and his breakfast followed at an appropriate hour. He was treating a plateful of bacon and eggs with anything but gentleness when Detective Duncarry drifted in.

The American's lean face and keen eyes did not suggest that on the previous night he had been looking upon much champagne when it was bubbly.

"Was I canned?" he demanded, extending a cool, steady set of fingers. "Did I burble and bleat, Saint?"

"Not a bit. Gay and festive, and developing symptoms of sleeping sickness towards the close—but those symptoms were only the natural outcome of a long day of toil and tribulation."

"I must have shifted a tankful," grinned the American impenitently. "And coming from an arid and boozeless land, you must admit I'm a good amateur at pulling round. Cigar?"

The Saint shook his head.

"Not yet, old son. Do you know, I've an idea that show last night isn't going to be anything like the end of the fun."

Duncarry nodded.

"I'm not arguing," he said.

The Saint clicked over a switch, and when the coffee was bubbling in the glass bulb of the machine he turned the tap and handed a steaming and fragrant cup to the New Yorker.

"There's a bottle of Biscuit '15 in the corner," he said. "If you've got a heavy feeling, spray your coffee with it and you'll be ready to drop into the deep end of the next course like a penguin off a high springboard." He fetched the bottle over and regarded his guest whimsically. "Damn you, Dun, I'm afraid I'm beginning to like you!"

Duncarry gave one of his curt nods.

"I'll say the same to you. We've fought on different sides, but that's all over now. I'm staying here for another eighteen days, and if there's any trouble around, and you want a willing volunteer, you can count me in. I may not be so decorative, but in a wild corner you won't find me squealing or quitting."

"Maybe I'll be taking you at your word," said the Saint. "The trouble will be coming sure enough."

They sat and yarned for a while longer; and then the Saint rose and flicked a cigarette end out of the window.

"Let's get out of here before the phone rings again and we hear some more grousing from Teal." He smiled gently, smoothing his hair, with his eyes on the ceiling. "Know anything about spiders, Dun?"

It was a most disconnected question to have jerked at him without any warning, but Duncarry never blinked.

"Not much," he answered. "I did once read a book about 'em by a guy named Fabre. Lady spiders, it seems, eat their husbands, so I gather their divorce courts have a thin and hungry time."

"I don't know at what time of the year spiders are in season," said the Saint meditatively, "but there's a very fine specimen hanging from the electrolier right now. It looks ominous. Jack Farnberg will have to go for a ride, Dun, but I don't want Teal to get me hanged for it."

"Do it quick, and I'll help you and chance the hanging," said Duncarry recklessly.

The Saint laughed; and then a ring on the front door bell interrupted his reply. He slipped to the window and peered out cautiously.

"It's Charles Barringer's employer, backer, and prospective pa-in-law," he said, turning to find Duncarry pushing back his

chair. "Sir Enoch Wiltham, K.B.E. Don't bother to buzz off."

He went out and admitted the visitor, and a couple of minutes later Sir Enoch Wiltham entered the sitting room. His legs were short, his body had a prosperous bulge, and his few remnants of hair were divided equally into two parts. His round, red face was founded upon more chins than were strictly necessary.

"Mr. Templar?" he asked huskily.

"My name. This is Mr. Duncarry, of the New York Detective Bureau."

"I wish to speak to you on a rather delicate matter," said Wiltham, and Simon turned to the New Yorker with a shrug.

"Surry, Dun. I'll see you at the Piccadilly in about half an hour."

Duncarry nodded and picked up his hat; and Sir Enoch lowered himself into a chair.

"Barringer has spoken of you in terms of great admiration," said Sir Enoch. "He gave me to understand that you were assisting the police in the Gaydon's Wharf case, and I wondered—could you tell me, or would it be exceeding your duty to say whether he is still under suspicion?"

"I'm afraid he is. Personally, I think it's ridiculous."

"And I'm certain of it. Why, I myself can account for every moment of his time during the period when the murder is supposed to have been committed! The suggestion is preposterous."

Simon Templar spread out his hands.

"Nobody knows that better than I do," he said. "In fact, I have very good reason for knowing that Charles is indisputably innocent."

Sir Enoch clasped his hands over his prosperous bulge, and went on to explain that he was putting up the money to develop Barringer's new method of producing commercial alcohol. It all seemed absolutely square and above-board; and although the Saint had a constitutional dislike for men with multitudinous chins and husky voices, he made one of his intuitive decisions that Sir Enoch Wiltham did not belong to the ancient and crowded order of grafters.

"Charles is a good boy—I'm immensely fond of him. He'll be a rich man one day, and——"

"And he's going to marry your daughter. Isn't that it?"

"There's no one I'd be happier to see her marry."

Simon nodded, and lighted another cigarette.

"I think we shall find a way of clearing him before very long," he said.

"If you can do that, I shall be deeply in your debt." Sir Enoch gazed at his feet and appeared

to hesitate. Presently he added, jerkily: "I had another question to ask——"

"Shoot."

"I wondered if you could give me any information—— The fact is—— Well, to tell you the truth, I've been invited to embark in the American bootleg business."

Simon's eyebrows lifted faintly.

"I'm afraid I'm not the greatest authority in the world on that game," he said. "Duncarry could tell you more about it than I can. Would you like to meet him again?"

"Is he in the business?"

"On the contrary, his job is to stop it—but he should know pretty well all there is to know about it. The risks are big, but the profits are in proportion. Naturally, you can't insure your cargo, and so you may be badly stung. Come along to the Piccadilly with me and talk it over with Duncarry. The morality of it won't worry him as long as you don't propose to butt into his area."

Wiltham seemed doubtful, but the Saint was curious. He pressed Sir Enoch irresistibly and won his point. They were at the door when the telephone bell began ringing, but with the sure and certain knowledge that it was Chief Inspector Teal butting in again, the Saint ignored the call. Sir Enoch's car and chauffeur were in attendance, and they were quickly wafted to the portals of the Piccadilly.

Detective Duncarry cared considerably less than a hoot about bootlegging, provided it was not carried on in the placid and law-abiding district of New York which he controlled; but when the Saint gravely presented Sir Enoch as a gentleman eager to enter the booze racket, even the unemotional American betrayed mild surprise. But when, after lunch, Sir Enoch ordered a bottle of Napoleon brandy and half a dozen cigars listed at a guinea each, Duncarry's heart softened. Sir Enoch Wiltham, it appeared, had a good many irons in the financial fire. He had purchased a large quantity of second-rate champagne, some vitriolic whisky, and a reservoir of French brandy that would have served admirably as fuel for spirit stoves if the quantity of water it contained had not rendered it completely fireproof.

"And you got the bright idea of shoving this stuff over to the land of the thirsty and free?" said the Saint.

"As a matter of fact, I was only wondering how to make a fair profit out of the stuff when this offer came," answered Sir Enoch, "and I was promised that a ship would be found if I would provide the cargo."

"What did the guy who made this offer know about the game?" inquired Duncarry lazily.

"He said he knew it inside out, and had his own organization on the other side to distribute the liquor. He was quite frank about it, in a way—he told me he was in touch with one of the big gangs who were ready to handle and pay for any quantity of genuine wines and spirits."

The New Yorker nodded.

"There's a market for the genuine article," he said. "They make the cheap stuff themselves, but they can always find a home for good imports. All the same, my advice to you is to keep out. Sell this guy the stuff in London, and leave the rest to him. Once you let it get over the other side, you may not find it so easy to cash their check."

Having said his piece, which was unusually long for him, Duncarry relapsed into silence behind his cigar. The eye which came within Sir Enoch's line of vision was dreamy and impassive, but the eye that the Saint could see had a question in it.

"I'm afraid I'm too old and fat to be an outlaw," said Sir Enoch in his throaty voice, "but my mind is sometimes so young and foolish that I had even thought of making the trip myself to enjoy the thrill."

"Depends on what you call enjoyment," said the American, still with that questioning eye on the Saint; and then Simon raised his eyes and saw a vision in the offing that made him cover his brow with a slight groan.

"Good-afternoon," said Mr. Teal.

The Saint sighed, performed the necessary introductions, and invited the detective to be seated. Sir Enoch offered a cigar.

"Sorry the number of that car didn't help you," said the Saint.

"Faked plates," said Teal sleepily. "I wasn't expecting it would be any use."

He refused brandy, and chewed monotonously. It did not seem to be his radiant morn.

"There's nothing else you can tell me?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"There wouldn't be. I could murder that guy with the machine gun with my own hands, and smile while I was doing it. Why didn't he hit you?"

"Probably wanted to annoy you, Claud." The Saint blew a perfect smoke ring and turned to Duncarry. "The way this country is run is weird and wonderful. I pay rates and taxes which go towards maintaining the comic-opera police force of which Claud Eustace is such a distinguished member, but if I put in a claim for a rebate on account of a nice new suit ruined because I was compelled to lie

down and soak up the London mud while the police allowed someone to spray the landscape with bullets, I'll bet any money it would be turned down."

"If you'd stood up and got sprayed yourself, I'd have stood you a coffin," said Teal acidly.

He departed soon afterwards, with the air of a Christian martyr going into cold storage.

Again Duncarry glanced at the Saint as if expecting a cue, and this time he received one. The tip of the Saint's cigar traced a word in the air; and Duncarry rose, muttering something about a forgotten telegram, and cruised off in quest of his overcoat and hat. He finished his cigar in the lounge, and there the Saint rejoined him later.

"Dun, I have been had for a mug. I've promised his Knighthood to clear Charles Barringer. I suppose we all have our moments of insanity."

"How come?"

"I saw your inquiring eye fixed on me like a gimlet, and guessed you were on the point of asking the old boy the name of the man who was going to handle his cargo. But I'd sized him up. Knowing who you were, he'd have seen trouble coming for those birds, and the question would have frozen him stiff. I set about it in another way. Enoch really is fond of Barringer, and really does want to get him out of this police mess. That's where I made my break. I promised to clear Barringer as white as if he had just been bleached."

"And what did you get for that?"

"Kellory," answered the Saint briefly.

Duncarry pursed his lips and emitted a low whistle.

"Blinder Kellory? Is that where Jack Farnberg drifted to, then?"

"Seems like it. And it seems that Jack is proposing to work a bit of business into his trip over here."

"And Ardossi, and that yacht of his——"

"Fits in. Vittorio told him he was still in the old game. The rest seems fairly easy—but the promise I gave about Barringer is going to give real trouble."

The lean American meditated for a moment.

"If Jack Farnberg's in this, and you meet, I suppose you'll bump him off?"

"Yeah." The Saint gazed glumly at the table cloth. "Killing Jack has never been the ambition of my young life, but it's one of the things that are thrust upon one. If I don't kill him, he'll certainly kill me—and that would be too too dreadful."

Duncarry frowned.

"If it's all the same to you," he

said, "I'd like to know why you're so sure Barringer didn't kill Friste."

The Saint looked at him.

"Because I know who did," he said.

Something in the set of his mouth discouraged further questions, and there was silence for a few moments. And then the Saint laughed, and all the old careless gaiety danced back into his eyes.

"My brain seems to improve every day," he said. "In the last two hours I've had two brilliant inspirations."

"And what are they?"

"At the moment I can only tell you one of them. You remember my mentioning a dragon when we were having a look at Gaydon's Wharf? The idea I've just had about that dragon is probably one of the most brilliant ideas I shall ever have. The first time I said anything about it, I wasn't any too sure how it was going to fit in; but I think it's in its place now. You may get ready to scream at that joke when the time comes, sonny boy."

"Taxi, sir?" ... The thickset man who had just emerged from Pattman Buildings nodded.

"Farringay Mansions, Chelsea."

The door of the cab closed with a bang. It was a fairly long journey from the heart of the City to Chelsea, but the driver made good time of it, and, without consulting the meter, his passenger pushed a ten-shilling note into his hand.

Ten seconds later, the taxi driver entered the building and approached the hall porter with an envelope in his hand.

"Where does the chap I just drove up live?" he asked. "I found this in the cab. Will you take it?"

"Take it yourself, and he may spring a couple of bob," said the porter. "Number eleven."

"Thanks, mate."

The driver hurried up the carpeted staircase, and near the end of a corridor he saw the number of the flat blinking at him in polished brass figures above a shining knocker. He lifted the knocker and rapped.

The passenger opened the door himself.

"You left this on the floor of the cab, sir."

The man frowned.

"It isn't mine," he said.

"Better look at it and make sure, sir. It isn't sealed."

The thickset man with the drawling nasal accent turned back the flap of the envelope and drew out a card. Then he saw what was drawn on it, and his heavy jaw dropped.

"Jolly sort of day, isn't it,

Jack?"

The taxi driver took off his peaked cap and straggling walrus moustache, and Farnberg stared at him. The silenced automatic which Detective Duncarry had admired gleamed blue-black in the Saint's right hand.

Jack Farnberg dropped the card, and his big hands went up slowly.

"Am I on the spot, Saint?" he asked huskily.

"Near enough."

The gunman's tongue flicked over his lips. He was the abysmal brute, but he had no lack of courage. He gave his shoulders a shrug and grinned crookedly.

"Get on with it, then," he said. "You stacked this deck, Saint, and it's your ante this time."

"Yes, I'm going to kill you, Jack," said Simon Templar softly. "And if Vittorio happens along, he'll be able to split the funeral with you. I'm a forgiving sort of bloke, honey, but the man who says that the Saint framed him is asking for something hot and nasty."

"Shoot—and preach the damned sermon afterwards," snarled Farnberg, and again his tongue slid over his dry lips.

"Not yet, dear one," answered the Saint gently. "Just now I've got a promise to keep, and that lets you out. But I wanted you to know what was coming to you. Now yelp, Jack. There's a hall porter down below. Open your mouth and exercise your lungs!"

Someone came pattering along the corridor, and the Saint took two swift steps backwards and shifted his automatic to his left hand. In the mirror behind Farnberg he saw the door handle turn.

Then the door opened, and a woman came in. In the mirror, with one watchful eye fixed on Farnberg and the other looking behind him, the Saint took stock of her swiftly and comprehensively. She wore a brown fur-trimmed coat, brown close-fitting hat, silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes. Between her carmine lips was a lighted cigarette. Her face was powdered and her cheeks were rouged.

The Saint crooked his arm and straightened it again. His first smashed against the hat just where the lobe of an ear, with an earring in it, showed below the felt. It was a mule-kick of a punch, and the slim figure sprawled face downwards on the carpet without a sound.

The Saint shifted his gun back into his right hand, closed the door, and put his foot on a smouldering cigarette.

"Not good enough, Jack," he said regretfully. "Vittorio hasn't practised enough with those shoes—it was the way he walked

gave him away. Come on, Jack—let's hear you yell."

Farnberg showed his teeth.

"See here," he said, "if you didn't sell me to the cops in Brooklyn, I know you're in with them now, and I guess you've got a squad of them outside. I couldn't shoot straight the other night because the car lurched. So it's your turn now."

"Beautiful," said the Saint, "you may tell me one thing before I go. And you may say it quick. What have you done with Patricia Holm?"

He saw the sudden crinkling of Farnberg's forehead. And all at once he had a blinding, dazzling flash of understanding. Yet the most amazing thing about it was that it made him wonder why he had never thought of it before. It was superb, splendiferous—far too good to be true. But true it must have been. He had no further doubt on that score, and the realization filled him with a real and wild delight.

"Don't bother to answer," he said quickly. "I guess we'll be hearing from you again pretty soon. Till then, you can hold that for me!"

In one lightning movement the Saint lashed a terific uppercut into the point of the gunman's jaw, garnered him with a sweep of his arm as his body sagged, and let him drop gently forward over his outstretched leg. Smiling happily at the scene of slaughter, he paused to light a cigarette. Then he went out, shutting the door behind him.

"Did he drop?" asked the hall porter, and the taxi driver smiled seraphically under his replaced face-hair.

"Not half," he answered. "And now—where do we go?"

"There's one round the corner," replied the porter.

They went round the corner together.

Simon treated the porter to a pint of beer and a packet of cigarettes, and drove him back to the flats.

"Married?" he asked, as his unrecorded fare stepped out.

"Don't I know it! One kid, eighteen months, and the best yeller in England."

"Put that in its money box," said the Saint.

He crammed the ten-shilling note that Farnberg had paid him into the porter's hand and drove away.

Two hours later, resplendent in perfectly fitting evening clothes, the Saint was filling a slim, gold cigarette case in preparation for what he reckoned was a well-earned reward for his afternoon's work.

Simon had repaired his previous omission and made Duncarry a member of the Jericho Club, and there he knew he would find the American.

The club was down by the river, within a furlong of Farringay Mansions. On his way the Saint passed the door, and saw his friend the porter standing there looking up at the moon.

"Have you got a match?"

"Certainly, sir."

The porter fished out his matchbox and was rewarded with a cigarette. Not for a moment did he suspect that the slim and supremely elegant young man was none other than the princely taxi driver who had given him the ten-shilling note which even then was warming his pocket.

As he passed on, Simon Templar glanced up at the windows of the flats which fronted the river. In one of them—unless they had already taken fright and wing—there were two people with sore and sorry heads.

He chuckled and passed on. At the Jericho Club there was no crowd at that hour, for most of the members were late birds. In a quiet corner of the supper room he discovered Duncarry entertaining a select company with some bewildering card tricks. Seeing the Saint, Duncarry put the cards aside and drifted over to the bar. His quick eyes noticed the slight abrasions on the Saint's knuckles at once.

"More trouble?" he inquired laconically.

"Nothing much."

The New Yorker pulled thoughtfully at his cigar.

"Both of them?" he asked lazily.

The Saint told his story briefly, and Duncarry listened in silence. At the end he grunted.

"I'll bet you don't tell Teal that story," he said. "Gee, he'd murder you."

"He'd want to."

Duncarry gave him a puzzled look.

"I still don't know why you left 'em."

"I explained that long ago," said the Saint. "Furthermore, Wiltham came through on the phone this morning to say he had fixed up the sale of his cargo to Kellory, and that Kellory's representative would come to his office at five o'clock to pay for it. I guessed that representative would be Jack Farnberg, and so I was waiting outside."

"Sure. But when you'd got the skunks down and out——"

"Why didn't I collect them and deliver them to Scotland Yard? Well, for one thing I wanted Jack Farnberg for myself; and for another, I've got to let Jack run around until his check's cleared — according to my terms to Ali Baba of the forty chins."

"Beats me," said Duncarry helplessly. "That precious pair will never stop running now—

and they've still got that girl."

"That's why I'm letting them run," said the Saint. "Nothing will happen to Eileen—you can take that from me."

"But does Wiltham know that the man who shot you up the other night is the same man that's got his daughter?"

"He doesn't—naturally. But he'd be a fool if he hadn't noticed that there was something in the wind and that you were some of it. If I'd told him what we know, he mightn't have been so keen to make me promise that you'd do nothing to ball up his sale."

"You're playing with fire," said Duncarry grimly. "Not that I expect that's news to you, but you'd better take my tip and watch your step. If I was interested in that Wiltham girl, I wouldn't be too sure she's safe."

"And yet I know she is—for a day or two."

Duncarry shrugged.

"It's your affair," he said briefly. "Are we free for the rest of the evening?"

"So far as I know," said the Saint, and Duncarry expressed his unqualified approval.

The band struck up, and Duncarry produced and placed upon his head a most outrageous paper hat. From another pocket he brought a contraption which he elongated into a diabolical instrument of noise and discord. Blowing shrill blasts, he proceeded to give a gratuitous example of what he considered a one-man cabaret should be.

It was later when the Saint was presented with the banjo and requested to give one of his blasphemous recitals. But in these days he seemed destined to leave everything of that sort unfinished.

Again a waiter approached, and the Saint abandoned his attempt and went out to find Barringer in the vestibule.

"I had a letter to-night——"

"I know," said the Saint, and the young man stared.

"How do you know?"

Saint smiled.

"My spies are everywhere," he said calmly. "The letter said that you will disclose the secret of your alcohol invention in an arranged manner, or something unpleasant will happen to Eileen."

Barringer gaped at him wide-eyed.

"How the devil did you know that?"

"There's precious little I don't know, son," replied the Saint airily. "But I produced that brain wave by concentration alone, combined with many hours of fasting and prayer."

"But what are we going to do?"

"Nothing—to-night."

The Saint's hand fell on Bar-

ringer's shoulder, and the Saintly smile was quiet and reassuring.

"Don't think twice about answering that letter or obeying it. The occasion will not arise. To-morrow night you shall see Eileen again—I give you my word for that."

A few minutes later the Saint was continuing his song as if nothing had happened.

The Saint had not brought his car, but that night he had no wreckage to deliver to the hotel in Elmbury Square, for at the close of play Detective Duncarry was showing no signs of unsteadiness or sleeping sickness.

"We'll take a stroll and get some fresh air, Dun, and then pick up a taxi."

The night was crisp and dry, and they walked slowly along the Embankment enjoying the peace of the evening. As they came near Farringay Mansions, Simon pointed upwards.

"That's where Jack and I had our little heart-to-heart talk."

Detective Duncarry looked. Except for a light in the entrance hall, the flats were in darkness, and the face of the building was broken only by arrays of drawn blinds.

"It must have been a great moment when they both woke up," grinned the New Yorker.

"They're awake now," said the Saint. "See that?"

A pale light suddenly gleamed through three of the lowered blinds. Then one of the windows went dark again, and the other two followed suit.

"It beats me why they haven't made their get-away hours ago," said Duncarry.

The Saint glanced around.

"There's an empty taxi with its flag down—I guess they're making that get-away this minute. Fade into the sheltering shadows, Dun. I shouldn't think Jack's temper is any too good just now, and if he sees two suspicious characters hovering around he might do something sticky with a gun. I've promised to go and help Pat buy a new hat to-morrow, and I couldn't cope with the problem on a stretcher."

The taxicab stopped before the front entrance, and the driver jumped down and swung his arms, for there was a frosty nip in the air. He had to wait several minutes for his fares, but they emerged in due course—a man and a woman. Duncarry, sheltering behind the iron cage round an almost leafless tree, almost wept as the cab moved away.

"This country of yours is a damned sight too civilized," he said bitterly. "I suppose over here you've got to have a written permission from the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of

Canterbury to kill a mosquito. I've a gun in my pocket, and I could have settled the whole thing in two pops."

The Saint laughed.

"Keep off the grass," he said. "That couple of hoodlums is my preserve. But I'll tell you something, Dun."

Another taxi came prowling up beside them, and the Saint waved his hand and opened the door.

"What have you got to tell me?" asked Duncarry as they settled back and the cab moved forward.

"Only that I made one tiny little mistake a day or two ago," said the Saint. "And that was when I thought Eileen Wiltham had been taken in mistake for Pat. Didn't you say those lads made the cheap stuff on their own premises?"

"I did."

"Then everything is going to be quite all right," said the Saint comfortably, and lighted another cigarette.

From Sir Enoch Wiltham the Saint had gathered a few facts. The cargo that he had sold to the Kellory gang was to be picked up at sea by a ship lying three miles off Brest—the *Missolonghi*. The ship might have taken on the cargo more conveniently in a French port, and there was no law against it, but there was always the danger that a local American consul with a suspicious eye and an inquisitive nose might have queried the deal. It might have soaked into his head that the *Missolonghi*, registered at Sourabaya and flying Dutch colours, might not be travelling straight back to Java with so much throat oil on board. He might even, in his nastiness, have cabled across the Atlantic and advised the U.S. revenue cutters to sit up and take notice—and that would not have fitted in with Kellory's plans at all.

Simon Templar spent an idle day; and he was yawning over a book when two telegrams were delivered by the same messenger. The first was from Patricia Holm, who had been spending a couple of days with friends in Sussex, announcing that she would return about six that evening. The second telegram was more cryptic, but it only took him a second or two to absorb its meaning:

L.S.D.O.K.K.B.E.

The Saint gathered that Sir Enoch Wiltham's L.S.D. was O.K., and that was the information that he had been waiting for all day.

He rose thankfully, lighted a cigarette, and for a few moments paced the room in

thought. Patricia would be driving her own car, and since she was a careful driver and the car was a good one she would probably arrive about the time she had promised. Simon wrote a note and propped it up conspicuously on the mantelpiece. Then he went to his bedroom and remained there for some time.

In the gathering dusk he slipped like a shadow into the street and hurried away.

The man who guarded the gate leading to Deepsands Wharf looked out of his box.

"In Plymouth town there lived a maid,
(Bless you, young woman!)
In Plymouth town there lived a maid,
(O mind what I do say!)
In Plymouth town there lived a maid,
And she was mistress of her trade;
I'll go no more a-roving with you, fair maid——"

The man who trolled out the old sea chantey had a good voice though at this time it was slightly disturbed by occasional diaphragmatic spasms. He was tall, unshaven, unwashed, and not too steady on his feet.

"Who are you, and where do ye think you're going?" demanded the gatekeeper.

"Me? Wotcher mean?" The dirty stranger took a couple of inches of black clay pipe out of his mouth. "I'm a dustman, a bleedin' stoker on the *Miss*—something. Never can remember the name. Something Irish."

"The *Missolonghi*?"

"That's right. *Miss O'Longhi.* Where is she?"

The gatekeeper pointed.

"Down along there."

"Thanks, mate."

The Saint continued his erratic passage. He crossed a single line of railway and saw his objective. The *Missolonghi* was made fast to the wharf bollards, and a crane with a noisy, sputtering engine was swinging wooden cases into her—apparently Jack Farnberg and Vittorio had been making some other purchases besides the one in which the Saint had a deputy interest.

"For if that hooker isn't Vittorio's," figured the Saint, "my name is also Bobbliobblio."

She was a craft of about 1,600 tons, and had recently been painted a dirty drab tint over her original white. She was on the narrow side for carrying cargo, but the Saint knew that it did not require a *Bremen* to carry a large consignment of wines and spirits in cases that pack handily away.

The Saint refilled his cutty

with black shag. He was not sure that Jack Farnberg and Vittorio Ardossi were within a hundred miles of the yacht—they might have eluded Teal's net and got away to France by boat or aëroplane to board the *Missolonghi* by the vessel that was to meet her at sea with Sir Enoch Wiltham's contribution — but somehow the Saint was prepared to bet that his first deduction was right. And there was a very good reason why it should be right, for although Farnberg and Ardossi might have made a slick get-away on their own, they would have found it quite a different proposition to make that get-away with Eileen Wiltham for an unwilling third. Besides which, there was the other little spot of business in which Eileen Wiltham was concerned still to be settled. Farnberg's note to Barringer had instructed him to meet a car that would be waiting for him at a certain point on the road north of St. Albans at six o'clock. There would be no one there to meet that car—the Saint had arranged for that—and he expected that Farnberg and Ardossi would remain on the north side of the Channel at least until after the time limit they had issued had expired.

None of the men at work on the wharf took the least notice of him as he sat on a bollard smoking his pipe. He could see the tallymen checking the cases as they swung over on the wire and slid down out of view. In the glare of the electric lights an occasional Lascar moved across the deck, a familiar figure enough in the vicinity of Deepsands Wharf and still more familiar farther down the river where great docks open their water gates to the shipping of the world.

Still the Saint sat and smoked. The only white man he saw was the checker with his book and pencil. But even if the crew consisted entirely of Lascars, the yacht would be officered by Europeans, for all the navigation Farnberg and Ardossi had learned would not have steered a paper boat across a puddle.

There was a shimmer of heat above the funnel, and an upward trail of thin, gray smoke; but suddenly the banked furnaces were stoked and the funnel vomited a black, sooty cloud. The craneman's mate was adjusting the chains to the last of the cases.

"'Arf a mo," cried the Saint. "I might as well ride as walk. Right away!"

He stepped on the cases, and the wire cable slid over the pulley.

"Don't forget to put me down in the book," he said, as he sank past the tallyman. "Shove me

down as dynamite."

The tallyman closed his book and went ashore, and the Saint walked forrard along the alleyway. A Goanese boy, who was carrying a pail of steaming rice from the cuddy, looked up at him with a swift, slant-eyed glance. They were busy below, and the Saint could feel the growing heat of the stokehold.

He went on, humming a tune. The stevedores had been paid off, and the wharf was deserted. A heavy goods train rumbled through from the dockhead with a continuous warning whistle. Farther on, he found that the carpets had vanished from the saloon companion, and the saloon itself was strewn with packing cases.

The Saint put a match to his pipe, went on deck again, and ran into a stiff little man with a pointed beard and a braided peajacket with many buttons.

"Vot in Himmel you vant here?" he snapped. "You vass not on this ship belong."

The Saint's teeth gleamed in a smile through the grime on his face.

"I want all sorts of things, dear lad," he said. "I'm a dustman. I've got a ship somewhere, but I've lost it."

"Then get oud of this, or I kick you oud!"

"I'm on my way," said the Saint affably. "It may console you to know that the fact that I don't like your face has very little to do with it. Also, I wouldn't sail on your ship for fifty quid a week. And if I have any lip from you, dear heart, I'll knock those nice whiskers of yours through the back of your neck, and you can use them to fasten your collar."

He pushed the flat of his hand into the man's face and sent him staggering, and wandered over the gangway before the officer had regained his balance.

This meeting with the bearded man was unfortunate, for Simon Templar's brief but effective tour had led him to the conclusion that neither Farnberg nor Ardossi was at present on board the *Missolonghi*. The question of whether Eileen Wiltham was on board he had not had time to deal with—besides, he wanted to get all his eggs into one basket before the market opened. Somehow or other he would have to board the yacht again and do his stuff on the high seas.

And then suddenly Simon Templar met his man under the light of a spluttering arc lamp, and heedless of what it might bring from the ship the Saint raised his voice in a crescendo of joy.

"Jack Farnberg—my little pet!"

Like a panther the Saint crouched and leaped, and his hurricane rush swept Farnberg from his feet and brought him crashing down. Though by profession a bootlegger, Farnberg never touched strong drink, and he was as strong as a bull. The Saint's hands were at his throat. Farnberg managed to get his other hand under him, but Simon Templar's left hand got there first and whipped the gun from his pocket. The Saint sent it flying through the air with a wide swing of his arm; it clattered on the side of the yacht and splashed down into the water.

With an upward jab of his fist at the Saint's face, and a violent writhe, the gunman managed to free his throat. And then they locked and rolled together, heaving and straining in the coal dust and litter under the arc lamp, with the railway lines gleaming behind them.

Over the rails of the *Missolonghi* a little knot of Lascars watched the fight with stolid faces.

The two men were well matched. The Saint tried half a dozen tricks that had rarely failed him; but though the Saint remained uppermost he failed to smash the grip of the gunman's thick, steel-muscled arms. Farnberg's face was smeared with coal dust and slimy with sweat, and the plaster was peeling from the cut on his chin which the Saint's uppercut had inflicted at their last meeting; the Saint could see red murder glaring up at him in Farnberg's eyes, and he laughed softly.

They lurched over again, and something glinted white over the edge of the Saint's left sleeve —the ivory hilt of the knife strapped in its sheath to his forearm. He got his teeth to it, bit down until he had a firm grip of the hilt, and drew the knife with a sidelong jerk of his head.

Farnberg, squinting down, saw it pointed towards his throat, thin and razor-sharp, and the dark eyes of the Lascars on the yacht's deck glinted expectantly. Farnberg's collar had been torn away, showing his naked throat and bulging windpipe. The knife dipped closer, and Farnberg saw death an inch away, and the horror of it made his mouth sag and froze the glare in his eyes.

The point of the knife came nearer still. It pricked the skin, drawing a spot of blood, and the watchers on the deck shuffled their feet. And then Simon Templar lifted his head and spun the knife away.

"I won't dirty a good knife on you," he said. "I'll have you with my hands!"

The big arc lamp suddenly

spluttered more noisily, flamed in unusual brilliance; and then the carbons faded into dull red and light went out.

With the menace of the knife gone, Farnberg gathered every ounce of his strength. In the gloom he tightened his grip, dug his heels into the slag and coal dust, and heaved. Again they rolled over, and the Saint felt a momentary chill on his hand, the touch of polished metal. Then they rested again, gripped faster together, panting.

Then out of the darkness came a clash of opening gates, and the warning whistle of an approaching train, and the Saint knew the meaning of that chill touch on his hand.

They were lying on the rails.

Out of the tail of his eye, Simon saw a red globe of light sweeping forward out of the shadows. Startled by the unaccustomed darkness of the wharf, the engine driver opened the throttle of his whistle with a gush of steam that filled the air with shrieks.

"The train!" yelled Simon Templar. "We're in the fairway!"

Iron grips relaxed, and they rolled clear—forced into a moment's truce by the thread of simultaneous annihilation. They staggered up and stood panting; and then, when the train was less than three yards away, Farnberg leaped again. The Saint ducked in the nick of time, stepped back, and sent his fist smashing into Farnberg's face. The gunman went reeling back. His heel caught against the line, and as he fell he screamed once....

The Saint searched for a cigarette mechanically. The train was coming to a stop with a grate and scream of overworked brakes, but the engine had already passed him—and passed Farnberg also....

Then the arc lamp spat, reddened, and glowed again into hissing light, and in the light the Saint saw Ardossi only a yard away with a gun in his hand. He dropped on one knee and shot himself forward almost in the same movement; and as he did so he heard two shots, one on top of the other.

The Saint was not hit; but Ardossi, tackled low and brought crashing to the ground with him, lay curiously still. Simon pulled himself to his feet and saw a familiar face.

"Your prophetics were certainly right," said the voice of Detective Duncarry. "It's lucky I came along. You ducked quick enough, but he had his bead on you, just the same." He looked thoughtfully at the silent form of the Italian. "And I guess that was the last bead he'll ever draw, or my shooting isn't what it was."

The Saint nodded.

"Jack Farnberg's another—he had a nasty accident."

A moment later Chief Inspector Teal loomed up in his somnambulistic way.

"Miss Holm bust a valve spring and came in a couple of hours late," he explained. "She found your note and phoned me, and we came right along. Why didn't you tell me you'd located this ship of Ardossi's?"

"I had a promise to keep," said the Saint. "Did you see me keep part of it? It was a really beautiful bit of accidental death, Claud."

"It would be," said Teal sleepily.

He was not alone. Charles Barringer came up in the company of a detective-sergeant and joined the group. The youngster's face was white and strained.

"What's happened?" he asked, and the Saint looked at him and grinned.

"Just a few brief moments of law and disorder," he said cheerfully. "I guess you'll find Eileen on that tub all right, if you look long enough. Push on and do the rest of the rescue yourself, son—and make it romantic!"

Chief Inspector Teal unlocked the door of the offices at Gaydon's Wharf, and a stale and musty smell emerged to greet him, slightly disinfected by the aroma of Duncarry's cigar.

"And now you've dragged us here, what have you got to say?" he inquired, without noticeable optimism.

"Blowed if I know," said the Saint. "Struggle with it, old dear. I've promised Wiltham to clear up the mystery, and I'm relying on you. I'm not a detective."

He sat down on the desk.

"Stuffy," he said. "An open window would improve matters. Will you oblige, heart's delight?"

"Look here, Saint," said Teal patiently, "I know you're not altogether the fool you look and sometimes pretend to be. You've brought us down here—"

"And I promised to pay for lunch afterward, didn't I?" murmured the Saint sweetly. "Do you want the whole earth for nothing? Didn't I offer the best lunch that London could provide?"

"You certainly did," said Detective Duncarry.

The Saint raised his hat.

"Got a fag to spare, Teal?"

Teal threw the cigarette at him, and the Saint caught it adroitly in his mouth.

"Got a match, beloved?"

The matchbox came flying through the air with a rattle.

"Your taste in cigarettes is septic," said the Saint as he

lighted one, and the American grinned.

The Saint clasped his hands over his knee and leaned back.

"Have you solved the great dragon mystery that I mentioned last time I was here?" he asked.

"Friste certainly had a kind of brass dragon ornament," Teal said. "I've verified that. What about it?"

"Granted that our mysterious murderer slipped in and out through a keyhole, as he apparently did," said the Saint, "he'd find the trick a bit difficult if he was taking that dragon with him, wouldn't he?"

Teal's eyes opened a little wider.

"Go on," he said.

"Do you really give it up?"

"Go ahead."

"Then I'll show you a little trick," said the Saint.

From his pocket he took a length of string. A brief inspection of the books in a rack beside the desk produced a bulky *Who's Who,* and this the Saint tied firmly to one end of the string. He carried the book over to the window and balanced it precariously on the outside edge of the sill.

"Can you lend me a gun?" he said, turning to Duncarry.

The American produced a weapon, and Simon, after cautiously unloading it, tied the other end of the string to the trigger.

Then he picked up the window pole and backed some distance away from the window without taking up more than half the slack of the string. He rested one end of the pole on the sill, almost touching the book that was balanced there; the other end of the pole he rested against his body. He gripped the automatic firmly between the open palms of his two hands, aiming it at the centre of his forehead; and the watching eyes of the two detectives suddenly gleamed with a wild surmise.

"So simple, really," said the Saint, and took one step forward.

The pole pushed the balanced *Who's Who* off the sill, and the book vanished into space. The string tightened with a jerk, and the empty automatic clicked as the jar fired the trigger. Simon dropped his hands, and the gun, towed by the sinking weight of the book, slithered up to the windowsill and stuck there.

As the Saint stepped away, the window pole dropped to the floor inside the room.

"With a weight like that dragon at the other end of the string, the gun wouldn't have stuck—it would have gone right out," he said.

Chief Inspector Teal drew a deep breath and stared at him,

blinking; and the Saint pitched his half-smoked cigarette into the fireplace.

"Friste seems to have been some hater," he said. "He'd lost the girl that he wanted more than anything else in the world, and it was Charles Barringer who had beaten him to it. He must have known that even if he killed Barringer he'd still have no chance himself, and perhaps he had a feeling that life wasn't worth living without that one thing he wanted and couldn't have. But even then, for a fellow to hate hard enough to blow out his own brains in the loving hope and belief that someone will swing for it, and thereby solve two problems at once, is something new and strange and wonderful."

Chief Inspector Teal tilted back the bowler hat that he had not troubled to remove, and scratched his head. He gazed at the Saint with a kind of reluctant admiration in his eyes.

"Did you say you weren't a detective?" he asked.

"I did," said the Saint.

"I'm not sure that I couldn't run you in for perjury," said Mr. Teal, and the Saint laughed.

He lighted one of his own cigarettes and adjusted his wide-brimmed hat at its jauntiest angle.

"Do we move on to this lunch?" he suggested.

But it was never noted in the official records of the case that, as they sat at lunch, the Saint saw a look in Duncarry's keen eyes which suggested that a curious medley of thoughts and emotions were seething within the American; and to say that Simon Templar was surprised when Duncarry called round at Upper Berkeley Mews alone at six o'clock would be a blatant lie.

"I've always heard you were some thinker, Saint," said Duncarry. "And now I know it."

"Why?" asked the Saint innocently.

Duncarry reverently deposited an inch of ash from one of the Saint's cigars in an ash tray.

"Did you kill Friste?" he asked.

For a moment Simon Templar looked at him thoughtfully, and then the Saintly smile twitched at the corners of his mouth.

"I'm afraid I'd never heard anything about your brain, Dun," he said. "But you can have a testimonial from me any time you want it."

"You did kill him, then?"

"Of course I did," said the Saint. "Didn't I tell you he was a nasty man? I tapped on the door just after the last of the staff had gone, and he let me in himself. He was closing the

windows and preparing to lock up, and he dropped the pole where it was found when he saw my gun. I rigged myself up to look like him at a casual glance and went past the doorkeeper next morning just to make it more mysterious; on the first landing I changed back into my usual beautiful self and went out again."

Duncarry nodded.

"And I suppose it's occurred to you that Teal may have the river under those windows dragged to prove your theory?"

"Naturally it has," said the Saint calmly. "I made a special trip out there last night to plant the whole outfit for him to find."

Duncarry trickled some smoke through his nostrils and frowned.

"That dragon's still worrying me," he confessed. "It's the one thing I haven't been able to figure out."

"Oh, that" said the Saint. "That's easy. After the shooting I was drifting through a selection of Friste's private papers for some time, and that dragon got on my nerves. The sight of it offended me. So I simply heaved it through the window. But the time I spent figuring out a spare way of fitting all the facts together is neither here nor there." The Saint sighed, the sigh of a mind wearied after much righteous labour. "And now, what do you say we go and beat up the Jericho?"

THE SAINT IN SUSSEX

A notice posted in the Hawkhurts Court School, Sussex, England (reproduced below, without editing), announced this play I'd have loved to attend . . .

DON'T MISS IT! **Play by Nines**

Stars the Saint and two of his assistants in a big jewl robary.

the Saint is played by S. Neal. the two crooks are T. Morgan and Fraser. Assistants are Huckbody and Gilbert. Detective is Rosser I. Dustbin. Man is Fraser.

This faboulous, interesting, exciting, play will be on Saturday and and Sunday, 1st and 2nd of Feb.

What *was* that you were saying about the British schools?

H.S.S.

the same channel

by Robert Bloch

THE NIGHTMARE began when he awoke.

Most men are summoned from sleep by an alarm clock, but Selwyn was different. Selwyn was a writer, and his day started when the mailman rang the buzzer downstairs. The coming of the mail determined Selwyn's daily schedule—it could produce a check from his agent, an editor's request for revision, an assignment for a new story. The mailbox was a little tin womb which brought forth his life.

And now it was producing nightmares.

Selwyn slid his feet into slippers, wriggled into a robe. He wasn't entirely aware yet, and he didn't want to be, because a part of him was afraid. His consciousness blurred as he moved out into the hall, down the stairs. He opened the door in a daze, automatically sliding his hand into the mailbox, pulling out the big manila envelope, slitting it open and removing the manuscript within.

But then he was reading the letter and all at once he was completely awake. Awake, and in the nightmare. The nightmare said:

Readers who know Robert Bloch only as the author of PSYCHO and similar contributions to our understanding of the more than ordinarily unpleasant people who do walk the streets, do not know the real Bloch, author of some gently ironic classics in the s-f field (and of some that were less gentle), and of stories such as this, bridging the gap between today — and Tomorrow . . .

Dear Selwyn:
Sorry, but *The Uptowner* bounced this one. Haggerty says it's a cute little yarn, but —you guessed it—he just bought one last week, same idea and payoff, from Tarleton Fiske. That's the fourth time, isn't it? I guess it's just a case of great minds working in the same channels. Better try something else, huh? Sorry—

Al

Selwyn sat down on the bottom step. Yes, it was the nightmare again, the same nightmare over and over. The fourth time, as Al Harrison had mentioned. The fourth time in two months that he'd sent a story to his agent for submission. Each yarn had gone to a different editor, but the reports were all identical—another writer had just sold a similar piece with a similar theme, a similar ending.

Tarleton Fiske.

Selwyn had never heard of him, up until two months ago. As far as he knew, the man had never had a story published. He'd checked the Yearbooks down at the library and couldn't find his name listed. Besides, Selwyn had been in the game for a dozen years now—if Tarleton Fiske had been published, he'd recognize his byline from somewhere. Either he was a newcomer who did all his writing with the long arm of Coincidence, or—

Or his name was a pseudonym. A pseudonym for somebody who had access to Selwyn's manuscripts, and plagiarized them. A pseudonym for a dirty, doublecrossing rat like Al Harrison, perhaps.

Perhaps? There was no doubt about it, now. It had to be that way. Selwyn couldn't buy that bit about how great minds run in the same channels. He knew how his mind ran, where his ideas came from, and nobody else could possibly tap that secret source.

No, it was Al Harrison's work. That was the only answer which made sense; a nasty sort of sense, but better than the nightmare.

So Selwyn wrote a letter and fired his agent. Then he wrote another letter to Dick Holland, out on the Coast. Holland had been urging him to switch over to his outfit and try his hand at some movie scripts, get into the big loot.

The mailbox gave birth to an airmail special-delivery reply five days later. Dick Holland suggested he come on out. Things were slow at the big studios, but there was a wide-open market with the independents, particularly on these

monster epics. A screenplay treatment along such lines might be an easy way to break in. Maybe Selwyn could come up with an idea en route; when he arrived they could put it on paper and get some fast action.

Selwyn did better than that. He drove out in his car, and nights, in the motels, he set up his portable. By the time he arrived at Holland's office he was carrying the completed treatment of *The Devil Walks.*

"Solid!" said Dick Holland. "This is all we need, and it's got a real twisteroo. A natural, tying up the Satan bit with science fiction, and it won't cost a fortune to shoot, either. I'm going to show this to Associated right away. Meanwhile, you better start studying a few shooting scripts. Something tells me you're on your way to doing your first screenplay."

Selwyn went back to his motel and studied the scripts Holland gave him, and waited for his call. It came before the week was out.

"Funniest damn' thing," Holland told him. "Pritzlaff, he's story-editor at Associated, he was crazy about the idea. But just a couple of days ago they bought something that sounds like a carbon copy of your treatment. *Up From Hell,* by a character named Tarleton Fiske. Ever heard of him? Looks as if great minds run in the same—"

That did it. Selwyn had no intention of shouting, no intention of breaking down, but that's what you do when you have a nightmare. He tried to explain matters to Dick Holland, but Holland seemed to be even more upset by what he told him. The only way he could quiet him down was to promise to see this doctor Holland recommended. This headshrinker, Rossiter.

Dr. Rossiter's couch was well-upholstered, but it felt like a rack to Selwyn. Particularly after he'd told his story, and what he suspected.

"Don't you see? At first I thought it was just an ordinary case of plagiarism, but it can't be that, now. I know it sounds paranoid, but not if you consider parapsychology. Either he's what I say he is, or he's my *doppelganger.* And there are no *doppelgangers.*"

"Granted," said Dr. Rossiter. "But do we have any proof that one man can read another's mind?"

"Proof? What more proof do you need? This man, whoever he is, has been writing my stories for months and selling them before I can. Isn't that enough?"

"Not necessarily." Dr. Rossiter's voice was soft. "All creativity, so-called inspiration, is an outgrowth of autistic think-

ing. Its components are derived from a reservoir of impressions stored within the subconscious. Others beside yourself can draw from a similar source of impressions. There have been many instances of two minds arriving almost simultaneously at the same conclusion. The theory of evolution, the invention of the motion-picture camera, the steamboat—"

Selwyn shook his head. "I get my stories when I'm asleep," he said. "I've never told anyone that before, but it's the truth. I don't write my plots—I *dream* them."

Dr. Rossiter nodded. "So did Coleridge. So did Edgar Lucas White, and H.P. Lovecraft, and many others."

"Yes, but nobody *stole* their dreams!"

"Please," said Dr. Rossiter. "I assure you there must be a perfectly logical explanation. You are familiar, perhaps, with the old saying. Great minds run—"

Selwyn ran.

He ran from Dr. Rossiter. He ran from the motel he had been staying at in Hollywood. He ran all the way down to Tia Juana and went on a week-long drunk.

When he sobered up, he felt better. Perhaps the doctor was right. He *had* to be right, or else this was all a nightmare. And you can't live in a nightmare. You can't live and work and write.

Selwyn had to write again. He didn't know any other way to make a living. But this time he'd be careful. No dream-inspirations. In fact, the time had come to try something entirely different. All these years he'd specialized in fantasy, horror, science-fiction: It was time to tackle a straight novel, for a change. Well, perhaps not a mainstream job, but at least something a bit more realistic. He'd collected a lot of notes, and this one he'd do from a regular outline.

So Selwyn found another motel; a considerably cheaper one, not far from Venice. And he holed up alone for a month. When he emerged he sought out Dick Holland again.

Holland was happy to see him show up again looking so well, and happier still to get the manuscript of *Shake Hands With A Monster.*

"Non-fiction, you say? I'll shoot it in to the New York office for a fast reading. Soon as I get word, I'll give you a jingle."

Selwyn spent three weeks waiting for the jingle, but the time passed pleasantly. He kept away from the typewriter and went down to the beach every day, and gradually he seemed to regain his perspective. There

were no dreams now, and none of this feeling of communication with the mysterious unconscious. It was good that he'd written a factual book for a change, with his eyes open. Perhaps the doctor was right; maybe he *had* been exaggerating a sheer coincidence.

And then the jingle came and Holland was on the phone, saying, "But after all, the Cleveland torso slayings are down on the books. Anybody could look up the same dope you did and write a case-history. So the guy at Ajax said this manuscript came in just two days before yours. And they took it, even though they never heard of Tarleton Fiske—"

Selwyn was back in the nightmare again, but somehow he knew that he'd never really left it. That's why he could be so calm, now. He hung up slowly. And then he dialed long-distance and put through his call to Ajax in New York. He spoke pleasantly and softly to a receptionist, a personal secretary, and an editor. And finally he got the information he wanted. He got Tarleton Fiske's address.

Because it was all a nightmare, it didn't really surprise him to discover that Tarleton Fiske had mailed his manuscript from a spot less than thirty miles distant from where Selwyn was now standing.

Nothing surprised Selwyn any more, not even his own calmness. He could sleep now, and awake refreshed, with his plans all made.

He could drive down to Laguna Beach and see Tarleton Fiske.

Tarleton Fiske lived in an unpretentious little house overlooking the cliff at the south end of town. He was a small man with oddly pointed features and slanted eyes. In the dimness of the cottage he might have passed for a mulatto.

He wasn't, of course, as Selwyn knew. And as he explained, the moment he stepped inside. He had to speak rather loudly because of the way the surf boomed on the twilight beach below.

"Dr. Rossiter was right," he said. "There are no proven telepaths on earth. Therefore you must come from somewhere else."

The telepath nodded, eyes immobile. "If you guessed that," he said, "then I'm surprised you dared to seek me out. Aren't you afraid I can read your mind?"

Selwyn shook his head. "Not now," he declared. "That's something else I finally decided. Your telepathic ability is limited to contact with sleeping minds only. That's why you couldn't use it at random to acquire infor-

mation of value. I do not know what your ultimate purpose is here on earth—"

The telepath's eyes narrowed. "I suggest that it would not be wise to inquire."

"—and I do not care," Selwyn continued. "But even an alien who can pass for human must still face the problem of maintaining existence, establishing himself with an income. That's where your talent came in handy. You read my mind, stole my stories. Perhaps you were attracted by the fact that I dealt with the concept of creatures from outside in my writing."

The telepath's mouth creased. "I don't care for your choice of words," he said. "But I'm more concerned by your statement that you aren't interested in my purpose here on earth. Wouldn't your first thought, as a writer of imaginative fiction, be that I might have plans for taking over the world in the future?"

Selwyn shrugged and put his hands in his pockets. "That doesn't matter at all, now," he said. "You see, I came prepared."

He pulled the revolver from his pocket.

But the creature was faster. It drew, aimed, fired—all in the instant it took for a single wave to crash upon the beach below.

Too late, Selwyn remembered where he'd gotten the idea of shooting the telepath; he'd dreamed about it the night before.

As he sank to the floor, he could just hear the mumble of the creature's remarks. Not the first part of the sentence, only the last.

Something about, "—the same channels" . . . . .

PATROLLING A COASTLINE

The six lonely members of New Jersey's marine police were watching the start of the boating season this Spring with understandable concern.

The previous year, at that time, the force had nine full-time policemen, and 300 volunteer harbormasters, responsible for marine safety and law-enforcement along the 125 miles long New Jersey coastline, the inland waterway, Sandy Hook and Raritan Bays, and parts of Newark Bay and the Delaware and Raritan Rivers. There were also five Coast Guard stations with a complement of 62 men, but these stations were closed in March of this year and most of the volunteer harbormasters appointments expired in the fall.

So, this April, one marine policeman was patrolling the Delaware River as far as the Delaware Water Gap by boat, car and trailer boat. Another marine policeman was running the Bureau of Navigation field office at Lake Hopatcong. And the other four were working out of the State Navigation Building at Point Pleasant, on the inland waterway.

Shore residents waiting for the appointment of additional patrolmen and the reappointment of the volunteer harbormasters, were getting impatient.

case of the veil of isis

by Sax Rohmer

I Have Made no attempt, in these chronicles, to arrange the cases of my remarkable friend, Moris Klaw, in sections. Yet, as has recently been pointed out to me, they seem naturally to fall into two orders. There were those in which he appeared in the rôle of criminal investigator, and in which he was usually associated with Inspector Grimsby. There was another class of inquiry in which the criminal element was lacking: mysteries which never came under the notice of New Scotland Yard.

Since Moris Klaw's methods were, if not supernatural, at any rate supernormal, I have been asked if he ever, to my knowledge, inquired into a case which fell strictly within the province of the occult.

To that I answer that I am aware of several; but I have refrained from including them because readers of these papers would be unlikely to appreciate the nature of Klaw's investigations outside the sphere of ordinary natural laws. Those who are curious upon the point cannot do better than consult the remarkable work by Moris Klaw entitled, "Psychic Angles."

Sax Rohmer unquestionably had an incalculable influence on the folk-myths of our time. Fu Manchu seemed a very real person to hundreds of thousands of people. This contribution to the myth of the sinister Oriental has overshadowed Rohmer's very real interest in Egypt and the Near East.

From: Sax Rohmer's THE DREAM DETECTIVE. Copyright 1925 by Doubleday, Page & Co. Reprinted by permission of Paul R. Reynolds.

But there was one case with which I found myself concerned that I am disposed to include, for it fell between the provinces of the natural and supernatural in such a way that it might, with equal legitimacy, be included under either head. On the whole, I am disposed to bracket it with the case of the headless mummies.

I will take leave to introduce you, then, to the company which met at Otter Brearley's house one night in August.

"This is most truly amazing," Moris Klaw was saying; "and I am indebted to my good friend Searles"—he inclined his sparsely covered head in my direction — "for the opportunity to be one of you. It is a séance? Yes and no. But there is a mummy in it — and those mummies are so instructive!"

He extracted the scent spray from his pocket and refreshed his yellow brow with verbena.

"How to be regretted that my daughter is in Paris," he continued, his rumbling voice echoing queerly about the room. "She loves them like a mother — those mummies! Ah, Mr. Brearley, this will cement your great reputation!"

Otter Brearley shook his head.

"I am not yet prepared to make it public property," he declared, slowly. "No one, outside the present circle, knows of my discovery. I do not wish it to go farther — at present."

He glanced around the table, his prominent blue eyes passing from myself to Moris Klaw and from Klaw to the clean-cut dark face of Doctor Fairbank. The latter, scarce heeding his host's last words, sat watching how the shaded light played, tenderly, amid the soft billows of Ailsa Brearley's wonderful hair.

"Shall you make it the subject of a paper?" he asked suddenly.

"My dear Doctor Fairbank!" rumbled Moris Klaw, solemnly, "if you had been paying attention to our good friend you would have heard him say that he was not prepared, at present, to make public his wonderful discovery."

"Sorry!" said Fairbank, turning to Brearley. "But if it is not to be made public I don't altogether follow the idea. What *do* you intend, Brearley?"

"I intend to experiment," answered Brearley.

"In what way" I asked.

"In every way possible!"

Doctor Fairbank sat back in his chair and looked thoughtful.

"Rather a comprehensive scheme?"

Brearley toyed with the bundle of notes under his hand.

"I have already," he said, "exhaustively examined seven of the possibilities; the eighth, and — I believe, the last — remains to be considered."

"Listen now to me, Mr. Brearley," said Moris Klaw, wagging a long finger. "I am here, the old curious, and find myself in delightful company. But until this evening I know nothing of your work except that I have read all your books. For me you will be so good as to outline all the points—yes?"

Otter Brearley mutely sought permission of the company, and turned the leaves of his manuscript. All men have an innate love of "talking shop," but few can make such talk of general interest. Brearley was an exception in this respect. He loved to talk of Egypt, of the Pharaohs, of the temples of the priesthood and its mysteries; but others loved to hear him. That made all the difference.

"The discovery," he now began, "upon which I have blundered — for pure accident, alone, led me to it — assumes its great importance by reason of the absolute mystery surrounding certain phases of Egyptian worship. In the old days, Fairbank, you will recall that it was my supreme ambition to learn the secrets of Isis-worship as practised in early Egyptian times. Save for impostors, and legitimate imaginative writers, no one has yet lifted the veil of Isis. That mystical ceremony by which a priest was consecrated to the goddess, or made an arch adept, was thought to be hopelessly lost, or, by others, to be a myth devised by the priesthood to awe the ignorant masses. In fact, we know little of the entire religion but its outward form. Of that occult lore so widely attributed to its votaries we know nothing — absolutely nothing! By we, I mean students in general. I, individually, have made a step, if not a stride, into that holy of holies!"

"Mind you don't lose yourself!" said Fairbank, lightly.

But, professionally, he was displeased with Brearley's drawn face and with the feverish brightness of his eyes. So much was plain for all to see. In the eyes of Ailsa Brearley, so like, yet so unlike, her brother's, he read understanding of his displeasure, I think, together with a pathetic appeal.

Brearley waved his long white hand carelessly.

"Rest assured of that, Doctor!" he replied. "The labyrinth in which I find myself is intricate, I readily admit; but all my steps have been well considered. To return, Mr. Klaw" — addressing the latter — "I have secured the mummy of one of those arch adepts! That he was one is proved by the papyrus, presumably in his own writing, which lay upon his breast! I unwrapped the mummy in Egypt, where it now reposes; but the writing I brought back with me and have

recently deciphered. A glance had showed me that it was not the usual excerpts from the 'Book of the Dead.' Six months' labour has proved it to be a detailed account of his initiation into the inner mysteries!"

"Is such a papyrus unique?" I asked.

"Unique!" cried Morris Klaw. "Name of a little blue man! It is priceless!"

"But why," I pursued, "should this priest, alone among the many who must have been so initiated, have left an account of the ceremony?"

"It was forbidden to divulge any part, any word, of it, Searles!" said Brearley. "Departure from this law was visited with fearful punishments in this world and dire penalties in the next. Khamus, for so this priest was named, well knew this. But some reason which, I fear, can never be known, prompted him to write the papyrus. It is probable, if not certain, that no eye but his, and mine, has read what is written there."

A silence of a few seconds followed his words.

"Yes," rumbled Klaw, presently; "it is undoubtedly a discovery of extraordinary importance, this. You agree, my friend?"

I nodded.

"That's evident," I replied. "But I cannot altogether get the hang of the ceremony itself, Brearley. That is the point upon which I am particularly hazy."

"To read you the entire account in detail," Brearley resumed, "would occupy too long, and would almost certainly confuse you. But the singular thing is this: Khamus distinctly asserts that the goddess appeared to him. His writing is eminently sane and reserved, and his account of the ceremony, up to that point, highly interesting. Now, I have tested the papyrus itself—though no possibility of fraud is really admissible, and I have been able to confirm many of the statements made therein. There is only one point, it seems to me, remaining to be settled."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Whether, as a result of the ceremony described, Khamus did see Isis, or whether he merely imagined he did!"

No one spoke for a moment. Then—

"My friend," said Moris Klaw, "I have a daughter whom I have named Isis. Why did I name her Isis? Mr. Brearley, you must know that that name has a mystic and beautiful significance. But I will say something—I am glad that my daughter is not here! Mr. Brearley—beware! Beware, I say: you play with burning fires; my friend—beware!"

His words impressed us all immensely; for there was some-

thing underlying them more portentous than appeared upon the surface.

Fairbank stared at Brearley, hard.

"Do I understand," he began, quietly, "that you admit the first possibility?"

"Certainly!" replied Brearley, with conviction.

"You are prepared to admit the existence, as an entity, of Isis?"

"I am prepared to admit the existence of *anything* until it can be proved not to exist!"

"Then, admitting the existence of Isis, what should you assume it, or her, to be?"

"That is not a matter for presumption; it is a matter for inquiry!"

The doctor glanced quickly toward Ailsa Brearley, and her beautiful face was troubled.

"And this inquiry—how should you propose to conduct it?"

"In surroundings as nearly as possible identical with those described in the papyrus," replied Brearley, with growing excitement. "I should follow the ceremony, word by word, as Khamus did!"

His eyes gleamed with pent-up enthusiasm. We four listeners, again stricken silent, watched him; and again it was the doctor who broke the silence.

"Is the ceremony spoken?"

"In the first half there is a long prayer, which is chanted."

"But Egyptian, as a *spoken* language, is lost, surely?"

"The exact pronunciation, or accent, is lost, of course; but there are many who can speak it. I can, for instance."

"And I," rumbled Moris Klaw, gloomily. "But these special surroundings? Eh, my friend?"

"I have spent a year in searching for the necessary things, as specified in the writing. At last my collection is complete. Some of the things I have had made, in the proper materials mentioned. These materials, in some cases, have been exceedingly difficult to procure. But now I have a complete shrine of Isis fitted up! Khamus's initiation took place in a small chamber of which he gives a concise and detailed account. It is because my duplicate of this chamber is ready that I have asked you to meet me here to-night."

"How long have you been at work upon this inquiry?" said Fairbank.

He put the question as he might have put one relating to a patient's symptoms; and this Brearley detected in his tone, with sudden resentment.

"Fairbank," he said, huskily, "I believe you think me insane!"

With his pale, drawn face and long, fair hair, he certainly looked anything but normal, as

he sat with bright, staring eyes fixed upon the other across the table.

"My dear chap," replied the doctor, soothingly, "what a strange idea! My question was prompted by a professional spirit, I will admit, for I thought you had been sticking to this business too closely. You are the last man in the world I should expect to go mad, Brearley, but I should not care to answer for your nerves if you don't give this Isis affair a rest."

Brearley smiled, and waved his hand characteristically. "Excuse me, Fairbank," he said, "but to the average person my ideas do seem fantastic, I know. That is what makes me so touchy on the point, I suppose."

"You are hoping for too much from what is at most only a wild conjecture, Brearley. Your translation of the manuscript, alone, is a sufficiently notable achievement. If I were in your place, I should leave the occult business to the psychical societies. 'Let the cobbler,' you know."

"It has gone too far for that," returned Brearley, "and I must see it through, now."

"You are putting too much into it," said the doctor, severely. "I want you to promise me that if nothing results from your final experiment, you will drop the whole inquiry."

Brearley frowned thoughtfully.

"Do you really think I am overdoing it?" he asked.

"Sure," was the answer. "Drop the whole thing for a month or two."

"That is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because the ceremony must take place upon the first night of *Panoi*, the tenth month of the Sacred Sothic year. This we take to correspond to the April of the Julian year."

"Yes," rumbled Moris Klaw, "it is to-night!"

"Why!" I cried, "of course it is! Do you mean, Brearley, that you are going to conduct your experiment *now*?"

"Exactly," was the calm reply; "and I have asked you all—Mr. Moris Klaw in particular—in order that it may take place in the presence of competent witnesses!"

Moris Klaw shook his massive head and pulled at his scanty, toneless beard in a very significant manner. All of us were vaguely startled, I think, and through my mind the idea flashed that the first of April was a date pathetically appropriate for such an undertaking. Frankly, I was beginning to entertain serious doubts regarding Brearley's sanity.

"I have given the servants a holiday," said the latter. "They

are at a theatre in town; so there is no possibility of the experiment being interrupted."

Something of his enthusiasm, unnatural though it seemed, strangely enough began to communicate itself to me.

"Come upstairs," he continued, "and I will explain what we all have to do."

Moris Klaw squirted verbena upon his brow.

"Doctor Fairbank!"

Fairbank, startled by the touch on his arm, stopped. It was Ailsa Brearley who had dropped behind her brother and now stood confronting us. In the dense shadows of the corridor one could barely distinguish her figure, but a stray beam of light touched one side of her pure oval face and burnished her fair hair.

She wanted help, guidance. I had read it in her eyes before. I was sorry that her sweet lips should have that pathetic little droop.

"Doctor Fairbank! I have wanted to ask you all night—do you think he——"

She could not speak the words, and stood biting her lips, with eyes averted.

"Miss Brearley," he replied, "I do, certainly, fear that your brother is liable to a nervous breakdown at any moment. He has applied his mind too closely to this inquiry, and has studiously surrounded himself with a morbid atmosphere."

Ailsa Brearley was now watching him, anxiously.

"Should we allow him to go on with it"

"I fear any attempt to prevent him would prove most detrimental, in his present condition."

"But——" There was clearly something else which she wanted to say. "But, apart from that"—she suddenly turned to Moris Klaw, instinctively it almost seemed—"Mr. Klaw—is this—ceremony *right?*"

He peered at her through his pince-nez.

"In what way, my dear Miss Brearley—how right?"

"Well—what I mean is—it amounts to idolatry, does it not?"

I started. It was a point of view which had not, hitherto, occurred to me.

"You probably understand the nature of the thing better than we do, Miss Brearley," said Fairbank. "Do you mean that it involves worship of Isis?"

"He has always avoided a direct answer when I have asked him that," she said. "But it is only reasonable to suppose that it does. His translation of the writing I have never seen. But he has been dieting in a most extraordinary manner for nearly a year! Since the workmen completed it, no one but himself has

been inside the chamber which he has had constructed at the end of his study; and he spends hours and hours there every day —and every night!"

Her anxiety became more evident with each word.

"You saw that he ate nothing at dinner," she continued, "and taxed him with faddism. But it is something more than that. Why has he sent the servants away to-night? Oh, Doctor Fairbank! I have a dreadful foreboding! I am so afraid!"

The light in her eyes, suddenly upturned to him in the vague half-light, the tone in her voice, the appeal in her attitude —were unmistakable. Fairbank had been abroad for three years, and I could see that between these two was an undeclared love, and almost I felt that I intruded. Morris Klaw looked away for a moment, too. Then—

"My dear young lady," he rumbled, paternally, "do not be afraid. I, the old know-all, so fortunately am here! Perhaps there is danger—yes, I admit it; there may be danger. But it is such danger as dwells here"—he tapped his yellow brow—"it is a danger of the mind. For thoughts are things, Miss Brearley—that is where it lies, the peril—and thought things can kill!"

"Ailsa! Fairbank! Mr. Klaw!" came Brearley's voice. "We have none too much time!"

"Proceed, my friends," rumbled Moris Klaw; "I am with you." And, oddly enough, I was comforted by his presence; so, it was evident, were the girl and the doctor; for Moris Klaw, beneath that shabby, ramshackle exterior, Moris Klaw, the Wapping curio dealer, was a man of power—an intellectual ark of refuge.

In the Egyptologist's study all appeared much the same as when last I had set foot there. The cases filled with vases, scarabs, tablets, weapons, and the hundred-and-one relics of the great dead age with which the student had surrounded himself; the sarcophagi; the frames of papyri—all seemed familiar.

Brearley sat at the huge writing table, littered, as of yore, and in picturesque confusion.

"We must begin almost immediately!" he said, as we entered.

A danger spot burned lividly upon either pale cheek. His eyes gleamed brilliantly. The prolonged excitement of his strange experiment was burning the man up. His nerve centres must be taxed abnormally, I knew.

Brearley glanced at his watch.

"I must be very brief," he explained, hurriedly, "as it is vitally important that I commence in time. Beyond the bookcase, there, you will see that a part of the room has been walled off."

We looked in the direction indicated. Although it was not noticeable at first glance I now saw that the apartment was, indeed, smaller than formerly. The usual books covered the new wall, giving it much the same aspect as the old; but, where hitherto there had been nothing but shelves, a small, narrow door of black wood now broke the imposing expanse of faded volumes.

"In there," Brearley resumed, "is the Secret Place described by Khamus!"

He placed his long, thin hand upon a yellow roll that lay partly opened on the table.

"No one but myself may enter there—until after to-night, at any rate!" with a glance at Moris Klaw. "To the most minute particular"—patting the papyrus—"it is equipped as Khamus describes. For many months I have prepared myself, by fasting and meditation, as *he* prepared! There was, as no doubt you know, a widespread belief in ancient times that for any but the chosen to look upon the goddess was death. As I admit the possibility of Isis existing, I must also admit the possibility of this belief being true—the more so as it is confirmed by Khamus! Therefore none may enter with me."

"One moment, Mr. Brearley," interrupted Klaw; "in what form does Khamus relate that the goddess appeared?"

A cloud crossed Brearley's face.

"It is the one point upon which he is not clear," was the reply. "I do not know, in the least, *what* to expect!"

"Go on!" I said, quickly. Although I seriously doubted my poor friend's sanity, I began to find the affair weirdly, uncannily fascinating.

Brearley continued:

"The ritual opens with a chant, which I may broadly translate as 'The Hymn of Dedication.' Its exact purport is not very clear to me. This hymn is the only part of the ceremony in which I am assisted. It is to be 'sung by a virgin beyond the door.' That is, directly I have entered yonder it must be sung out here. Ailsa has composed a sort of chant to the words, which, I think, is the proper kind of setting. Have you not, Ailsa?"

She bowed her graceful head, glancing, under her lashes, toward Fairbank.

"She has learned the words—for, of course, it must be sung in Egyptian——"

"But have no idea of their meaning," said his sister, softly.

"That is unnecessary," he went on, quickly. "After this, I want you all just to remain here in this room. I am afraid you will have to sit in the dark! Any sounds

which you detect, please note. I will not tell you what to expect, then imagination cannot deceive you. I will be back in a moment."

With another hasty glance at his watch, he went out in high excitement.

"Please," began Ailsa Brearley, the moment he was gone, "do not think that because I assist him I approve of this attempt! I think it is horrible! But what am I to do? He is wrapped up in it! I *dare* not try to check him!"

"We understand that," said Fairbank; "all of us. Do as he desires. When he has made the attempt, and failed—as, of course, he must do—the folly of the whole thing will become apparent to him. Do not let it worry you, Miss Brearley. Your brother is not the first man to succumb, temporarily, to the glamour of the Unknown."

She shook her head sadly.

"It is an unpleasant farce," she said. "But there is something more in it than that."

Her blue eyes were full of trouble.

"What do you mean, Miss Brearley?" asked Moris Klaw.

"I hardly know, myself!" was the reply; "but for the past two months an indefinable horror of some kind has been growing upon me."

With a deep sigh, she turned to a tall case and took from it a kind of slender harp. The instrument, of which the frame, at any rate, was evidently ancient Egyptian work, rested upon a claw-shaped pedestal.

"Do you play this? Yes? No?" inquired Moris Klaw, with interest.

"Yes," she said, wearily. "It comes from the tomb of a priestess of Isis and was played by her in the temple. It is scaled differently from the modern harp, but any one with a slight knowledge of the ordinary harp, or even of the piano, can perform upon it with ease. It is sweet toned, but—creepy!"

She smiled slightly at her own expression, and I was glad to see it.

Brearley returned.

He wore a single loose garment of white linen, and thin sandals were upon his feet. Save for his long, fair hair, he looked a true pagan priest, his eyes bright with the fire of research that consumed him, his features gaunt, ascetic.

Some ghost of his old humorous expression played, momentarily, about his lips as he observed the astonishment depicted upon our faces. But it was gone almost in the moment of its coming.

"You wonder at me, no doubt," he said; "and at times I have wondered at myself! Do not think me fanatic. I scarcely

hope for any result. But remembering that the writing is authentic and that there prevails, to this day, a widespread belief in the occult wisdom of the Egyptians, *why* should not this problem in psychics receive the same attention from me that one in physics would receive from you, Fairbank?"

There was reason in his argument and in his manner of advancing it. Fairbank glanced from Brearley to the girl sitting with her white hands listlessly caressing the harp strings. The silence of the great empty house grew oppressive. Suppose the ancients indeed possessed the strange lore attributed to them? Suppose in those Dark Continents, the Past and the Future, somewhere in the vast unknown, there existed a power, a being, a spirit, named by the Egyptians, Isis?

Those were my thoughts, when Moris Klaw said suddenly:

"Mr. Brearley, it is not yet too late to turn back! This sensitive plate"—he tapped his forehead—"warns me that some evil thought thing hovers about us! You are about to give form to that thought being. Be wise, Mr. Brearley—abandon your experiment!"

His tone surprised everyone. Otter Brearley looked at him with an odd expression and then glanced at the watch upon the writing table.

"Mr. Klaw," he said, quietly, "I had hoped for a different attitude in you; but if you really disapprove of what I am about to attempt, I can only ask you to withdraw; it is too late for further arguments."

"I remain, my friend! I spoke not for myself—my life has been passed in this coping with evil things; I spoke for others."

None of us entirely understood his words, but Brearley went on, impatiently:

"Listen, please. I rely upon your coöperation. From now onward I require absolute silence. Whatever happens make no noise."

"I shall not be noisy, I, my friend!" rumbled Moris Klaw. "I am the old silent; I watch and wait—until I am wanted."

He shrugged his shoulders and nodded, significantly.

"Good!" said Brearley, and his voice quivered with excitement; "then the experiment, the final experiment, has begun!"

He suddenly extinguished the light.

Passing to a window, he looked up to the moon, and, a moment later, lowered the blind. Dimly visible in his white garment, he crossed the room. He might be heard unfastening the door of the inner chamber, and a

faint, church-like smell crept to our nostrils. The door closed.

Immediately the harp sounded.

Its tone was peculiar—uncomfortable. The strain which Ailsa played was a mere repetition of three notes. Then she began to sing.

Our eyes becoming more accustomed to the gloom, we could vaguely discern her now; the soft outlines of her figure; the white, ghost-like fingers straying over the strings of the instrument. The music of the chant was very monotonous, and weird to a marked degree. The sound of that ancient tongue, dead for many ages, chanted softly by Ailsa Brearley's beautiful voice, was almost incredibly eerie. I found myself gripped hard by a powerful sense of the uncanny.

No other sound was audible. Throughout the rambling old house intense silence prevailed. A slight breeze stirred the cedars outside. Every now and again it came—like a series of broken sighs.

How long the chant lasted I cannot pretend to state. It seemed interminable. I became aware of a curious sense of physical loss. I found myself drawn to high tension, as though the continuance of the chant demanded a vast effort on my part. Though I told myself that imagination was tricking me, the music seemed to be draining my nerve force!

Ailsa's voice grew louder and clearer, until the queer words, of unknown purport, rang out passionately, imperatively.

She ceased.

In the ensuing silence I could hear distinctly Moris Klaw's heavy breathing. A compelling atmosphere of mystery had grown up about us. Repel it how we might, it was there—commanding acknowledgment.

Fairbank, who sat nearest, was the first to see Ailsa Brearley rise, unsteadily, and move in the direction of the study door.

Something in her manner alarmed us all, and the doctor quietly left his seat and followed her. As she quitted the room, he came out behind her; and in the better light on the landing, as he told us later, saw that she was deathly pale.

"Miss Brearley!" he said.

She turned.

"*Ssh!*" she whispered, anxiously, "it is nothing— Doctor Fairbank. The excitement has made me rather faint, that is all. I shall go to my room and lie down. Believe me, I am quite well!"

"But there is no servant in the house," he whispered, "if you should become worse——"

"If I need anything I shall not hesitate to ring," she answered. "It is so still, you will hear the bell. Please go back! He has

hoped for so much from this."

Fairbank was nonplussed. But the appeal was so obviously sincere, and the situation so difficult, that he saw no alternative. Ailsa Brearley passed along the corridor. Fairbank slipped back into the study, where Moris Klaw and I anxiously awaited him.

From the inner room came Brearley's voice, muffled.

The long vigil began.

I found myself claimed by the all-pervading spirit of mystery. For some little time I listened in expectation of hearing Ailsa Brearley returning. But soon the strange business of the night claimed my mind, to the exclusion of every other idea. I found myself listening only for Brearley's muffled voice. Although the half-audible words were meaningless, their sound assumed, as time wore on, a curious significance. They seemed potent with a strange power proceeding not *from* them, but *to* them.

Then I heard a new sound.

Fairbank heard it—for I saw him start, and Moris Klaw muttered something.

It did not come from the trees outside, nor from the inner room. It was somewhere in the house.

A faint rattling it was, bell-like but toneless.

Brearley's voice had ceased. Again the sound rose—nearer. I turned my head toward Fairbank, and seemed to perceive him more clearly. I had less difficulty in distinguishing the objects about.

Again it came—the shivering, bell-like sound.

Even the strings of the harp were visible now.

"Curse me!" came Moris Klaw's hoarse whisper; "it seems to grow light! That is a delusion of the mind, my friends—repel it—repel it!"

Fairbank drew a quick, sibilant breath. A half-suppressed exclamation from Klaw followed; for the high-pitched rattle came from close at hand! The sense of the supernormal had grown unbearable. Fairbank's science and my own semi-scepticism were but weapons of sand against it.

The door opened silently, admitting a flood of the soft moon-like radiance. And Ailsa Brearley entered!

Her slim figure was bathed in light; her fair hair, unbound, swept like a gleaming torrent about her shoulders. She looked magnificently, unnaturally beautiful. A diaphanous veil was draped over her face. From her radiant figure I turned away my head in sudden, stark *fear!*

Fairbank, clutching the arms of his chair, seemed to strive to look away, too.

Her widely opened eyes, vis-

ible even through the veil, were awful in their supernormal, significant beauty. *Was* it Ailsa Brearley? I clenched my fists convulsively; I felt my reason tottering. As the luminous figure, so terrible in its perfect loveliness, moved slowly toward the inner door, with set gaze that was not for any about her. Doctor Fairbank wrenched himself from his chair and leapt forward.

"Ailsa!"

His voice came in a hoarse shriek. But it was drowned by a rumbling roar from Moris Klaw.

"Look away! Look away!" he shouted. "The good God! Do not look at her! *Look away!*"

The warning came too late. Fairbank had all but reached her side, when she turned her eyes upon him—looking fully in his face.

With no sound or cry he went down as though felled with a mighty blow!

She passed to the door of the inner room. It swung open noiselessly. A stifling cloud of some pungent perfume swept into the study; and the door reclosed.

"Fairbank!" I whispered, huskily. "My God! he's dead!"

Moris Klaw sprang forward to where Fairbank, clearly visible in the soft light, lay huddled upon the floor.

"Lift him!" he hissed. "We must get him out—before she returns — you understand? —before she returns!"

Bending together, we raised the doctor's inanimate body and half dragged, half carried him from the room. On the landing we laid him down and stood panting. A voice, clear and sweet, was speaking. I recognized neither the language nor the voice. But each liquid syllable thrilled me like an icy shock. I met Moris Klaw's gaze, set upon me through the pince-nez.

"Do not listen, my friend!" he said.

Raising Fairbank, we dragged him into the first room we came to—and Klaw locked the door.

"Here we remain," he rumbled, "until something has gone back where it came from!"

Fairbank lay motionless at our feet.

Presently came the rattling.

"It is the sistrum," whispered Moris Klaw, "the sacred instrument of the Isis temples."

The sound passed—and faded.

"Searles! Fairbank!"—it was Brearley's voice, sobbingly intense—"do not *touch* her! Do not *look* at her!"

The study door crashed open and I heard his sandals pattering on the landing.

"Fairbank! Mr. Klaw! Good God! Answer me! Tell me you are safe!"

Moris Klaw unlocked the door.

Brearley, his face white as death and bathed in perspiration, stood outside. As Klaw appeared, he leapt forward, wild eyed.

"Quick! Did any one——"

"Fairbank!" I said, huskily.

Brearley pushed into the room and turned on the light. Fairbank, very pale, lay propped against an armchair. Moris Klaw immediately dropped on his knee beside him and felt his heart.

"Ah, the good God! He is alive!" he whispered. "Get some water—no brandy, my friend—water. Then look to your sister!"

Brearley plunged his trembling hands into his hair and tugged at it distractedly.

"How was I to know!" he moaned, "how was I to know! There is water in the bottle, Mr. Klaw. Searles will come with me. I must look for Ailsa!"

A bizarre figure, in his linen robe, he ran off. Moris Klaw waved me to follow him.

The door of his sister's room was closed.

He knocked, but there was no reply. He turned the knob and went in, whilst I waited in the corridor.

"Ailsa!" I heard him call, and again, "Ailsa!" then, following an interval, "Are you all right, dear?" he whispered.

"Oh, thank Heaven it is finished!" came a murmur in Ailsa Brearley's soft voice. "It *is* finished, is it not?"

"Quite finished," he answered.

"Just look at my hair!" she went on, with returning animation. "My head was so bad—I think that was why I took it down. Then I must have dropped off to sleep."

"All right, dear," said Brearley. "I want you to come downstairs; be as quick as you can."

He rejoined me in the corridor.

"She was lying with her hair strewn all over the pillow!" he whispered, "and she had been burning something—ashes in the hearth——"

Ailsa came out. She seemed suddenly to observe her brother's haggard face.

"Is there anything the matter?" she said, quickly. "Oh! has something dreadful happened?"

"No, dear," he answered, reassuringly. "Only Doctor Fairbank was overcome——"

She turned very pale.

"He is not ill?"

"No. He became faint. You can come and see for yourself."

Very quickly we all hurried downstairs. Moris Klaw, on his knees beside the doctor, was trying to force something between his clenched teeth. Ailsa, with a little cry, ran forward and knelt upon the other side of him.

"Ralph!" she whispered; "Ralph!"—and smoothed the hair back from his forehead.

He sighed deeply, and with an effort swallowed the draught which Klaw held to his lips. A moment later he opened his eyes, glaring wildly into Ailsa's face.

"Ralph!" she said, brokenly.

Then, realizing how tenderly she had spoken—using his Christian name—she hung her graceful head in hot confusion. But he had heard her. And the wild light died from his eyes. He took both her hands in his own and held them fast; then, rather unsteadily, he stood up.

As his features came more fully into the light, we all saw that a small bruise discoloured his forehead, squarely between the brows.

Then Brearley, who had been back into the study, came running, crying:

"The papyrus! And my translation! Gone!"

I thought of the ashes in Ailsa Brearley's room.

"My friends," rumbled Moris Klaw, impressively, "we are fortunate. We have passed through scorching fires unscathed!"

He applied himself with vigour to the operating of the scent spray.

"God forgive me!" said Brearley. "What did I do?"

"I will tell you, my friend," replied Klaw; "you clothed a thought in the beautiful form which you knew as your sister! Ah! You stare! Ritual, my friends, is the soul of what the ignorant call magic. With the sacred incense, *kyphi* (yes, I detected it!), you invoked secret powers. Those powers, Mr. Brearley, were but *thoughts*. All such forces are thoughts.

"Thoughts are things—and you gathered together in this house, by that ancient formula, a thought thing created by generations of worshippers who have worshipped the moon!

"The light that we saw was only the moonlight, the sounds that we heard were thought-sounds. But so powerful was this mighty thought-force, this centuries-old power which you loosed upon us, that it drove out Miss Ailsa's own thoughts from her mind, bringing what she mistook for sleep; and it implanted itself there!

"She was transformed by that mighty power which for a time dwelled within her. She was as powerful, as awful, as a goddess! None might look upon her and be sane. Hypnotism has similarities with the ancient science of thought—yes! *Suggestion* is the secret of all so-called occult phenomena!"

With his eyes gleaming oddly, he stepped forward, resting his

long white hands upon Fairbank's shoulders.

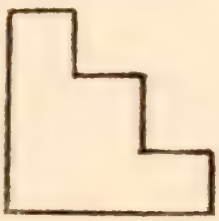
"Doctor," he rumbled, "you have a bruise on your forehead."

"Have I?" said Fairbank, in surprise. "I hadn't noticed it."

"Because it is not a physical bruise; it is a mental bruise, physically reflected! Nearly were you slain, my friend—oh, so nearly! But another force—as great as the force of ancient thought—weakened the blow. Doctor Fairbank, it is fortunate that Miss Ailsa loves you!"

His frank words startled us all.

"Look well at the shape of this little bruise, my friends," continued Moris Klaw. "Mr. Brearley—it is a shape that will be familiar to you. See! it is thus." He drew an imaginary outline with his long forefinger—



"And that is the sign of Isis!"

NEXT MONTH—

PROFILE OF A BLOODHOUND
by *STUART PALMER*

YOU ARE A SPY!
by *VICTOR CANNING*

WHO AM I?
by *MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD*

TRIAL BY BATTLE
by *ALEXANDRE DUMAS*

INSTEAD OF THE SAINT — III
by *LESLIE CHARTERIS*

and

ugly duckling

A New Story by *LAWRENCE TREAT*

—in the next issue, **THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE**

shadows in the sun

by Hal Ellson

THE ENORMOUS ragged brim of the sombrero shadowed the beggar's face, rags concealed his body. He gave the appearance of being small and wasted by the cruelty of poverty and twenty years of sitting in the sun in that same spot on the corner beside the hotel. At five past six the elevator man, Pedro Montana, stepped from the rear of the hotel into the narrow dusty side-street. The beggar was still at his post on the corner. One could ignore him, but superstition lay too heavily on Montana. As he passed the beggar, he dropped a coin, the tithe that suspended bad luck, and crossed the street to the plaza where he sat on a bench. Moments later, the beggar rose from his place, turned into the deserted side-street and removed his sombrero. An amazing transformation then took place. The feeble old fellow straightened up, became tall, a man in his prime who walked off jauntily. Slack-jawed, Montana bore witness to this.

Three days later and thirty miles away in a desert canyon, a boy herding goats witnessed the horror and final humiliation of death when he came upon

Hal Ellson, who will be remembered as the author of the best-seller, DUKE, returns with still another story of the Mexico which [illegible] — the Mexico for whom Death is no mystery — the Mexico [illegible] a matter of course, the possibility that Death can come, even to [illegible].

the remains of a man. Buzzards had plundered the corpse. The boy made the sign of the cross and drove his charges before him to an adobe house at the canyon's mouth. Splitting kindling, Vincente Vargas, his father, looked up and frowned. The boy pointed back into the silent canyon and told of his awesome find. Vargas wiped his sweating face, went into the house and came out. "Where are you going?" the boy asked.

"To Rosario to tell the police."

Rosario lay two miles away, a small village of crumbling adobes, desolate streets and permanent silence, echoing desertion, which didn't deceive Vargas. He proceeded on toward the cantina facing the plaza, the unofficial office of Carlos Munoz, Rosario's Chief of Police and entire force.

Munoz, fat as a sow, barrel-size, was asleep on a crude bench. His hooded eyes opened as Vargas entered. They greeted each other and Vargas told of the body in the canyon.

"And who is the dead one?" Munoz asked.

"I don't know. My son discovered the body; the buzzards have been at it."

Munoz shook his head, heaved himself up and moved toward the bar with a frown on his face. There'd been no trouble in the village, no one was missing, none but Vargas lived in the canyon and there was only one other house — owned by Señor Serra, a wealthy man from Montes who came on week-ends. The dead man might be Señor Serra, he thought, and raised two thick fingers. The barman opened a bottle, then another. The men drank in silence while the silence outside deepened and the hot sun lapped the dust of the empty streets.

Complexities stifle most men, but Munoz was uncomplicated; he ignored them. The dead man, he concluded, was Señor Serra, finished his beer and lumbered toward the door.

Vargas followed him out into the hot sun, to the dusty Ford of ancient vintage standing in the unpaved street, and climbed into it. Munoz started it and it rattled into life, shattering the leaden silence of the village and sending a startled rooster clucking back into the shadowed doorway of a house.

"Did you see any one in the canyon recently?" Munoz asked as the car moved off.

"Only Señor Serra driving through."

"Alone?"

"He is never alone."

"Then, as usual, a girl was with him?"

"That is true."

"You think the dead one is Señor Serra?"

"I believe so."

Munoz nodded, satisfied. The car rattled on across the desert and he spoke no more. At a distance, in the white glare of the day, masses of grey naked rock heaved abruptly up from the arid plain. The torturous road led on to the canyon. Vargas' son appeared as the car stopped in front of the house. The boy came forward when Munoz waved. "You know where the body is?"

"Yes, Señor," The boy pointed deeper into the canyon."

"All right, get in."

The boy climbed in, and the car started forward. At a distance of a hundred yards the road ended, a dry stream-bed replaced it and the car moved at reduced speed. A half-mile into the canyon, the boy said, "Here," and Munoz braked the car. The three of them stepped out. The boy led the way to the body. It lay in the dubious shade of a dying mesquite, a grotesque sight. Munoz waved the boy away and nodded to the canyon wall where it plummeted in a long slope from a bastion of naked rock. A road, hacked from it, led upward to a high point where a house perched incongruously on the very edge of a precipitous cliff—Señor Serra's week-end place.

Munoz frowned. His burden of fat was an imposition, the climb would be a trial, but there was no way out. "Let's go," he said and led the way, halting at intervals to rest and wipe his sweating face. Finally they reached the house. A new Cadillac stood outside it. The front door was open, welling silence. The brazen heat of the sun came off the naked rock. Munoz wiped his face and called out. His voice echoed from the depths of the canyon, but no one answered.

He frowned again and moved forward. Vargas followed him into the house. It distilled a feeling of utter emptiness, but this was illusion. In the kitchen they came on the body of a girl of twenty or so who'd been stabbed to death.

"Do you know her?" asked Munoz. Vargas shrugged: "Señor Serra brought many girls here."

"I know." Munoz' gaze lingered on the dead girl. She was too young and pretty to die, but at least, the buzzards hadn't got to her.

Nodding, he led the way out of the house and down the slope to the mutilated corpse. The dead one was Serra. The abandoned car, the empty house, the dead girl suggested that and no more. "What do you think?" Munoz asked, turning to Var-

gas to substantiate his own conclusion.

Vargas rubbed his face with a horny hand. "Señor Serra brought many girls here. Perhaps a brother or lover of the one up there followed and killed them."

Satisfied, Munoz nodded and bent to the corpse. A pocket gave up a wallet of fine leather heavy with bills. An identification card bore the name Juan Torres. Munoz was taken aback. "According to the name in this wallet, this man was called Juan Torres."

"No." Vargas was certain. "This is Señor Serra. See that gold tooth?" He pointed at the corpse. "That's how I know."

Munoz weighed the wallet in his hand. "Then who is Juan Torres?" he asked.

Vargas shrugged. Pocketing the wallet, Munoz nodded and they returned to the car. "You're going to leave the bodies?" asked Vargas.

Munoz started the car, turned it about and answered, "I'm leaving them for the police at Montes. They can take care of the matter now."

Both men fell silent then. Some minutes later the car stopped before Vargas' house; man and boy got out. With a wave, Munoz drove off. Soon he was out of the canyon and racing across the desert toward Rosario.

Chief of Police Lopez in the city of Montes took the call from Munoz, put down the phone and asked for Detective Fiala. A half hour passed before Fiala appeared. "You enjoyed your coffee?" Lopez asked him sharply.

"As always," Fiala smiled.

"And it took you half an hour to walk across the plaza?"

"I was waiting for a contact. Unfortunately he didn't show."

"Unfortunately you have a little trip in store. You're to go to Rosario and see that fool Munoz. He called and said a man and a girl have been murdered in Garcia canyon. That's all I could make out. He was probably drunk."

Fiala laughed and started for the door. An hour later he drove into Rosario, still dozing in the hot sun, and had no difficulty finding Munoz. Munoz was asleep in the cantina, snoring on a bench with a half-empty botle beside him. Awakened by the barman, the fat one got to his feet, greeted Fiala and invited him to a drink. With that, he described in brief the violence that had erupted in the canyon and handed over the wallet he'd taken from the dead man's pocket.

"A lot of money," Fiala re-

marked, inspecting its contents. "Who is Juan Torres?"

Munoz shrugged. "Who knows? But the one from whose pocket I took the wallet is Señor Serra. That much I do know."

"And who is Señor Serra?"

"A rich man from Montes. You don't know of him?"

"No, nor of many others. Montes is a big place."

"Yes, not like little Rosario. A few of the men drink too much and make a bit of trouble, but in Montes . . . ."

"Montes has its problems," Fiala admitted. "But what about Señor Serra?"

"Who knows about him? But he must be important. That house he had built in the canyon cost much money. Every week he brought a girl up there. They were always young and pretty. I've seen them when he passed through here. Very pretty girls. That's what money does; one can pick the ripest fruit."

"Apparently he picked one too many," Fiala said flatly. "Too bad."

"Oh, no. He deserved what he got?"

"I don't follow."

"Well, he was using those girls, taking advantage of them, like the rich always do. A brother or lover of one of them probably killed him."

"And killed the girl? That doesn't seem likely."

"It's more than likely if she decided to make trouble."

Fiala shrugged. "But suppose the dead man is Torres?"

"No, he is Serra. I can swear to that. Vicente Vargas, who lives at the head of the canyon, also identified him."

"I see. Now shall we go to the canyon?"

"As you wish." Munoz signaled with his finger and the barman produced three bottles of beer. Fiala was already moving toward the door. Munoz lumbered after him and climbed into the detective's car.

The trip across the desert was uneventful. Both men remained silent, Munoz sipping from the bottles, Fiala occupied with his thoughts which mainly concerned the wallet of Juan Torres. Why had Serra been carrying it and not his own?

As they entered the canyon, Munoz finished the third bottle and flung it out the window. "There's Señor Vargas," he said, pointing at the adobe house beside the road. "Do you wish him to identify the body."

"That won't be necessary," Fiala answered, waving a greeting to Señor Vargas.

A hundred yards farther on, the road ended and they took to the dry stream-bed. "Stop here," Munoz finally said. Fiala braked the car and they climbed out and walked to the place where

the corpse lay, scattering the buzzards who had returned to their horrible feast.

"You're certain this is Señor Serra?" Fiala asked, wondering how the fat one could possibly identify a corpse so mutilated.

"The gold tooth. That's how I know him," Munoz replied with conviction.

Fiala nodded, then stooped and carefully searched the dead man's clothes. The pockets were empty. Standing again, he studied the ground in the immediate area, then started forward toward the house on the cliff. With a groan, Munoz followed him.

When they reached their destination, Fiala examined Señor Serra's car and came away empty-handed. Munoz had already entered the house and was sitting in the living room, gasping for breath, when Fiala entered. "The girl is in the kitchen," he said.

Fiala nodded and moved on to the kitchen, noted the body, then searched the house. In a bedroom he found a purse, which he assumed was the girl's, but nothing in it indicated her identity and only one item was of interest – a key which he slipped into his pocket.

The next day both newspapers in the city of Montes carried the story of the double murder and a photo of the dead girl. Her body, with Serra's, lay in the morgue. Oddly, no one claimed the body of Señor Serra, but at seven in the evening an old woman and a girl of sixteen appeared at the mortuary and identified the girl.

When they were ready to leave, Fiala escorted them to an office. The old woman was too taken with grief to talk, but the girl was available. Yes, she knew Señor Serra by name. Her sister had worked for him as a secretary, her first job. She gave the address of Serra's place of business, but the nature of it she didn't know. Fiala held up the key he'd taken from the dead girl's purse. No, she didn't recognize it. Nor did she know any one named Juan Torres. Fiala thanked her and went upstairs to the office of the Chief of Police, but Lopez had gone, which was all to the good.

By this time night had settled in. A black sky hung over the city which was coming to life after the heat of the day. Fiala left the Municipal building, crossed the plaza and entered a noisy cantina.

One drink and he walked out reluctantly. There was work to do and tomorrow he had to face Lopez, who was always difficult to satisfy. A taxi stood at the curb. He climbed in and gave the business address of the late Señor Serra.

A brief ride brought him to another plaza. In a narrow street close by the plaza, the taxi halted. Fiala paid the driver and entered an unimposing building. One flight up he found a door on which was printed in black letters – SERRA ENTERPRISES. He took out the key he'd found in the dead girl's purse, opened the door and touched a switch. The light revealed a small office, desk, typewriter, several files, a couch, three chairs, a wall-calendar – nothing else. Serra Enterprises didn't appear capable of supporting a man with a yen for Cadillacs, women and an impressive country place like that in the canyon.

Fiala went to the desk and probed it. A ream of typing paper, a pad, some envelopes – nothing else. This was a forewarning; he turned to the files and found them stark empty. Serra Enterprises was either a uniquely unbusinesslike outfit, or had not yet begun to function.

Shrugging, Fiala went down to the street and entered the baroque decaying lobby of the hotel on the corner. At the desk, he asked the clerk if he knew who owned the building in back of the hotel. The property, an old wing of the hotel, still belonged to it. Fiala nodded and identified himself, then asked to see the manager.

The clerk pointed to an office across the lobby. Fiala knocked on the door and was admitted. Again he identified himself and came to the point: he asked for Señor Serra's home address. The manager provided it and shook his head. "Too bad. That was a terrible way to die."

Fiala nodded. "Now if you can tell me what kind of business the man was in . . . ?"

"Business?" The manager shrugged.

"Then what can you tell me about him?"

"Not much. He paid his bills promptly and never complained."

Fiala nodded. "And would you happen to know a Juan Torres?"

"I don't think so. No."

Fiala thanked the manager and left. Outside, he stepped into a taxi, gave directions and sat back. Three blocks from the main plaza he left the taxi and entered an old hacienda which had been converted to a bar, with rooms to let on the upper floor. Señor Serra had occupied one of them, yet the barman and manager had never heard of him. For the moment Fiala was taken aback, then he asked for Juan Torres.

"Señor Torres? Of course," the manager smiled.

"He's in?"

"Oh, no. In fact, he hasn't been here for the past two weeks. You see, he only uses his room for convenience. Occasionally he

brings a lady. There's not much else I can tell you about him."

"But he has a gold tooth in front of his mouth?"

"Yes, that much I know."

Fiala thanked the manager and left. So Serra was Torres, but he'd suspected as much and the truth of this was only a half-truth. Still puzzled, he walked to the main plaza and entered the restaurant where daily he had his coffee and took his meals, a convenient place because it was close to headquarters and a rendezvous for certain business-men of dubious character, including Roberto Moya, an ex-convict who was "indebted" to Fiala and his main contact with the underworld of Montes.

Moya was seated in back of the restaurant with several companions. Fiala noticed him, nodded almost imperceptibly and went to the counter. Ordering coffee, he drank it quickly and walked out, crossed the street and entered the plaza. Some minutes later Moya joined him there on a shadowed bench.

"Juan Torres," Fiala said. "What can you tell me about him?"

Moya thought a moment and shook his head. "Nothing, Señor. Nothing at all."

"You'll have to do better than that. See what you can pick up."

Moya went back to the restaurant and returned to report that a Juan Torres owned the Hotel Royale at Escobeda and Madero Avenues, the cantina across the way and a ranch on the road to San Rafael. Señor Torres liked to gamble and could be found there this evening. "But don't gamble with him," Moya added. "They say no one can beat him with the dice."

Fiala laughed and glanced at his watch, while the informer walked away. Eight-thirty. A half hour's drive would bring him to the ranch. He sighed and got up.

The road to San Rafael wound through flat desert country. The black night hung over it, there were no signs of habitation. Fiala napped in back of the taxi, woke when the driver called him and watched the headlights in an incandescent arc sweep a group of scrawny trees, sleeping cattle, a well, and finally impale the white wall of a crude ranch house. A fire burned beside it. A man wearing a sombrero walked out of the shadows.

Fiala climbed from the car and approached the man, an old fellow with grey stubble on his face, who removed his sombrero, bowed and announced himself as the care-taker for Señor Torres.

"Señor Torres is home?" asked Fiala.

"Señor Torres does not live

here," the old man informed him. "Every Thursday he comes with friends, but not tonight." The old man shrugged. "Perhaps he is busy elsewhere."

"And where would elsewhere be?"

"Who knows?" the old man shrugged again.

"But you know where he lives?"

"No, Señor."

"Has he a family?"

"I am only the care-taker here. I know nothing of his business, except that every Thursday he comes with friends and goes away."

"Then it's a week since you saw him?"

"Yes, Señor."

Fiala thanked him, moved away and came back for one more question. When the old man answered it, he returned to the waiting taxi and settled back. The care-taker's reply had confirmed his belief: Torres and Serra were one and the same man, but he was still in the dark and too tired to think.

Nodding off, he was awakened by the sound of a speeding car and a clopping of hooves. The driver opened the door for him in front of the Hotel Royale. He got out. Two shoe-shine boys and a beggar trailed him to the door. He ignored them, went in, identified himself and asked for the manager. The one behind the desk bowed and asked what service he could render. "Señor Torres? Yes, he owns the hotel, but he's not here. About a month ago, the last time he was in—to dine with a lady. Where does he live?" The manager gave the information, and Fiala left.

The taxi was waiting. He climbed in and directed the driver to the main plaza, ignoring the address given to him, for it was the same one the sister of the dead girl had quoted earlier that evening. Yes, Torres was still Serra, and Serra was Torres and nothing made sense, not when a murdered man who had owned a hotel, a ranch, a bar, a business and a country house, lay unclaimed in the morgue. No one seemed to know him, least of all those he employed.

The taxi turned into the plaza and drew up to the curb. Fiala climbed out and hurried into the restaurant where he'd contacted Moya. The informer was still there. With a nod to him, he went to the counter for coffee and left as soon as he drank it.

Presently Moya joined him in the plaza. "You want to see me, Señor?"

"Yes, I went to the ranch. Torres wasn't there, nor at the Hotel Royale. It's my belief that he's dead. You heard about the murder in the canyon?"

"I heard."

"I happen to think Serra and Torres are the same person. I also think those names were assumed by the man lying in the morgue."

"And you want me to find out what his true name was?"

"It's important. I'll be waiting here."

Moya nodded and left. Five minutes passed. Ten. Fiala frowned, and footsteps sounded on the path. Moya came out of the shadows. "You were right, Señor. The one you're interested in was known as Villafano."

Fiala shook his head. "And who was Villafano?"

"The man behind Pedro Gonzalez, the one who buys stolen goods. Gonzalez fronted for him, but everything ended there. That's all I know."

"All right." Fiala dismissed Moya and looked at his watch. It was growing late. Suddenly he felt tired and disgusted. Nothing had been clarified, while new complications had arisen, but one thing he was certain of — Villafano was only another name for the dead man lying in the morgue.

Chief Lopez glowered as he finished his coffee, sat back and lit a cigarette. From behind police headquarters and across the burning plaza the bronze bell in the Cathedral tolled the hour. Eleven o'clock. Lopez had arrived at his office only minutes ago, with dark rings under his eyes, an angry look on his face. Downstairs, newspaper reporters had attempted to question him about the murders in the canyon and roused his ire. Slowly now he wiped his mouth with his handkerchief.

"Well, speak up," he said to Fiala. "Or haven't you anything worth saying?"

Fiala resented the sarcasm, but remained calm and explained that the murdered girl had been identified, that she's been employed as a secretary by Señor Serra who had conducted a business which had been a front for other activities.

"What other activities?" Lopez wanted to know.

Fiala gritted his teeth. "The picture isn't completely clear yet, but it is known that Serra fenced stolen goods, using the name Villafano. Also, this morning I received word that he dealt in narcotics under the name Rivera. He was also known as Juan Torres. Under that alias he chose more respectable activities, operating a bar, hotel and ranch."

"Interesting, all of it," said Lopez, his voice edged with sarcasm. "But what about the murderer?"

"I'm working on that."

"But not doing very well."

Fiala reddened, and Lopez leaned forward. "You used to be

a tourist guide. Remember? Find the murderer, or you'll be dealing with the tourists again."

The door slammed behind Fiala. Sharp footsteps sounded on the tiled balcony. Ah, now he's angry, thought Lopez, smiling and reaching for a cigarette.

An hour after his talk with Lopez, Fiala was back at the house in the canyon. Finding nothing there, he went to the house of Señor Vargas and questioned him and his son. Neither could add anything to what he already knew, but Señor Vargas referred him to Rogelio Santana, a man who at times had done odd jobs for Señor Serra.

Santana lived in the desert on the other side of the canyon. He was old and not talkative. No, he knew nothing about Señor Serra, except that for one so rich, he was careful with his money. Fiala started to leave when the old man stopped him. "You know how miserly he was? One day I cleaned his car and found clothes like these, a sombrero older than mine, which is very old. Ha, a rich man who saved rags."

Fiala laughed, returned to Montes and retraced his steps of the previous day, to no avail. No new data came up, not a single clew or hint of one. Señor Serra, alias Torres, Villafano and Rivera, — remained an enigma. Exhausted he dropped in for coffee at the restaurant in the main plaza and saw Moya, the informer. A shrug told him that no new information was at hand.

Disgusted, he left and went to the Black Cat, a favorite drinking place, with the atmosphere of a private club. On rare occasions he got drunk. This was an occasion. In spite of the Black Cat's club-like atmosphere, a continuous stream of vendors came and went through a side-door. In the late hours, a stocky man with a portable glass-case filled with home-made candy entered and sat down at Fiala's table. "Some sweets to take home?"

"No, not tonight, Morales."

"Ah, that means you're in trouble with Lopez again. Is it about the canyon murders?"

Fiala sipped his drink with an unsteady hand and nodded. "My sympathy," Morales went on, "but I think you're about to run into more trouble, another murder."

Fiala lifted his head and Morales explained: "My son has a friend, Pedro Montana, a married fellow with a family who always minds his own business. Some days ago he borrowed my son's car. When he returned it, it was covered with dust and the upholstery was stained with blood."

"What makes you think it was blood?" Fiala asked.

"I'm sure it was. My son thinks the same."

"And how did Montana explain the stains?"

"He didn't. He was drunk when he returned the car."

"Even if those stains were of blood, what makes you think he murdered someone?"

"The night before he borrowed my son's car, he was at my house for the celebration of my grandson's birthday. He came drunk and spoke of killing the beggar Hernandez who sits at the Hotel Colonial. At the time, I thought he was joking, but I haven't seen Hernandez at the hotel for past five days."

"He's sick," Fiala suggested.

"Perhaps, but I doubt it. It's the first time in twenty years that he's been away from his post at the hotel. I know because I passed him every day on my way to the plaza."

Fiala shrugged. "Which still doesn't say that Montana murdered him."

"No, but I think he did, and my son thinks the same. Besides, he's been acting strange."

Fiala shrugged again. He had enough on his hands without investigating a missing beggar. Some one else could cover that, he thought, and signalled to the barman. Two drinks were brought to the table, but by that time the candy-vendor had picked up his case and left.

The walls of the room spun 'round and 'round. Fiala's head pounded, he wanted to sleep, but Morales' conversation kept returning to him. A missing beggar who might have been murdered by a quiet family man. There was no equation, no facts; the room continued to spin, the walls blurred. He closed his eyes and the sensation became worse, his head began to spin with the room, a sickening sensation. He braced himself, got to his feet and stumbled toward the door.

The streets were desolate. He made for the main plaza. Its lights greeted him, impaling empty benches and emptier paths, the mute square with its motionless trees. Angry voices burst from a cantina. He passed it and entered a restaurant. Three cups of coffee followed each other down his throat. He lit a cigarette.

The story of the beggar still nagged him. A delusion of Morales, but if a corpse were found? Lopez' face erupted before him with its perpetual sneer. One couldn't deal with a man like him.

Blood from a stone, he thought, and went out. He crossed the plaza to the hotel and the place where the beggar sat. It was vacant. He expected

that and stopped, his mind went blank. Then it came, the realization that for all the years he'd passed the beggar, he couldn't describe his face. The huge tattered sombrero had concealed it too well.

A faceless man, as anonymous as the one who lay in the morgue, but suddenly he recalled the words spoken that afternoon by Rogelio Santana, the one who did odd-jobs at the house in the canyon. The old man's angry after-thought jolted him and set him moving.

On a street without a light he stopped at a weather-beaten door and knocked. Morales, the candy vendor, opened it.

"The address of Pedro Montana. Quick," said Fiala.

Morales gave it and off he went to the next street and knocked on another weather-beaten door. Pale and gaunt, Montana opened it and led him into the patio. Once there, Fiala came straight to the point. "Some days ago you were in Garcia canyon."

"I was there," Montana admitted.

"And you murdered a man."

"I did."

"Why? How did it happen?"

Montana hesitated, then in a voice that trembled with anger, he explained how he always dropped money in the lap of the beggar who sat in front of the Colonial Hotel. "I felt sorry for him and, then, five days ago I happened to cross the street and sit in the plaza. A moment later the beggar got up to leave. I'd always thought he was old and small, but he was neither when he got up and removed his sombrero. Curious, I followed him to the area in back of the Cathedral where the rich people live. He went into one of the finest homes. I did not understand, so I waited. When he came out, I hardly knew him for the clothes he wore. There was a girl with him and they got into a big car and drove off. Then I understood."

"Understood what?" said Fiala.

"That the beggar was rich, that the fine house, the car and the girl were his."

"And that's why you killed him?"

Montana ignored the question. "The next day I borrowed a car and waited for him. He came home, changed, left in his car and picked up a girl in front of the Cathedral. I followed them to the house at the canyon and killed him at the door. The girl saw it happen and ran into the house. I found her in the kitchen and tried to talk to her. She wouldn't listen. I had no choice. I killed her too."

Exhausted by his terrible recitation, Montana paused. His

head hung, his breath came in wracking gasps. Fiala gave him a few moments and said, "You killed him at the door, but his body was found below in the canyon. How do you explain that?"

"I dragged him into the car and brought him there so the buzzards could tear him to pieces."

"And so no one could identify the body?"

"No, I hated him for what he did to me."

Fiala's brows came up. "But what did he do to you?"

"Ah, you don't understand. You can't, but every day for twenty years he accepted money from me, a poor man with a family, while he lived like a king. He took from my wife and children and so ...." Montana shrugged. "It's too late now to undo what I did. I committed a terrible sin — and that poor girl, I never meant to kill her. I lost my head. Now I'm glad it's over, glad I've been caught....."

Bitter coffee. Fiala pushed it away, lit a cigarette, glanced at his watch. Ten a.m. Time to face Lopez. He left the restaurant and crossed the plaza to the Municipal building. Upstairs on the balcony facing the patio, he knocked on a door. Lopez looked up with a frown as he entered. "Ah, the best detective in Montes. I'm sure you've solved the murders in the canyon."

Fiala flushed and shook his head. "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I've found out nothing."

"That's all you have to say?"

"That's all, except that the one who sometimes called himself Serra got what was coming to him. And now, if you say so, I'm ready to go back to my old job."

"A good idea, but there are too many tourist guides in Montes," Lopez answered and dismissed him with a wave of his hand.

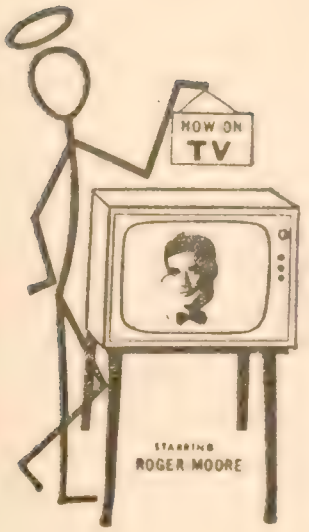
Fiala left and returned to the restaurant. The counterman served him. This time he added an extra spoonful of sugar to his coffee and found it sweet when he tasted it. . . .

CASE OF THE MISSING HOUSE

The vice squad in a southern city was tipped off recently that illegal liquor (as the news story put it) "could be found at a certain address". A search warrant was obtained, a raid was planned, and the detectives, the day before the scheduled raid, went to the address to size up the situation.

They returned the next morning—and found the house gone.

Some person or persons unknown had removed the house overnight—everything but the two chimneys which were left standing, monuments—perhaps—to what had passed before. . . .



LESLIE CHARTERIS' The saint on TV

ROGER MOORE AGAIN MEETS SOME OLD FRIENDS

ROGER MOORE, having tried out his directorial wings without scorching them with the production of "Sophia," has again placed himself on both sides of the camera for the first episode in the new series of "The Saint" stories which went into production after a ten-week break. The decision to make this further series provides solid evidence of the indestructible popularity of Simon Templar, both as a character and as a television personality as portrayed by Roger. It also settles the star's future for the next twelve months at least.

The current episode in production is "The Miracle Tea Party," which appeared in *SMM* for August 1963. This is the ingenious story of the use of tea packages in a plot to smuggle naval secrets.

The unit came into the studios after filming exterior scenes at Waterloo Station and Roger, mindful of the mobbings he has received when recognized by his fans, took the precaution of disguising himself with horn-rimmed glasses and the sort of expression on his face that Cecil B. DeMille might have worn when directing one of his Biblical epics.

The first person met on the set was veteran actress Fabia Drake, who returned to acting three years ago after the death of her husband. She gave up the stage on her marriage and remained away from the acting scene for twenty years.

It was a reunion for Roger

and Fabia after twenty-one years. The last time they met was when Fabia was Roger's drama tutor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Roger was then 16. "And," Fabia tells, with a chuckle, "he was in his element, because those were the war years and there was a ratio of 16 girls to three men—just about the right percentage for Roger!"

With the respect that befits a former pupil meeting his old tutor (and taking care not to refer to her as his former mistress!), Roger addressed her as "Miss Drake." But Fabia, mindful of their changed status, was quick to tell him: "Oh, no, it's the other way around now. You call me Fabia—and I'll call you Mr. Moore!"

Fabia Drake plays the part of Aunt Hattie whose niece, Geraldine McLeod, is the naval nurse closely involved in the spy drama events. This part is played by Nanette Newman, the sparkling young actress-wife of actor-writer-producer Bryan Forbes.

She, too, has known Roger Moore for sometime. "We're both keen on gambling," she confided, "and we're always meeting at the roulette tables. And if it isn't at a casino, it's an airport in one part of the world or another."

Both by coincidence and by design, Roger is surrounded by old friends in this episode. With the additional chore of directing the production, he has chosen players he knows well.

One of these old friendships dates back to his earliest days as a struggling unknown. He and Charles Houston (who plays one of the naval base staff in the plot) both played tiny roles in the Jean Kent picture "Trottie True" and were friends outside the studios as well. They met up again when both were in the Forces. This time, Roger was an officer; Houston was a Sergeant. But the difference in rank made no difference to their friendship.

Roger called on another old friend, in the burly shape of Robert Brown, for the part of one of the gang, Atkins. Bob Brown was his side-kick, Gurth, in the "Ivanhoe" TV series, but there was nothing very friendly about their character relationships when they came face to face in the "Miracle Tea Party" story. On opposing sides, their first day's filming together called for a hell-bent-for-each-other's-guts fight, with Bob Brown attacking Templar with a heavy crow-bar. It was the real thing.

"When you've been wielding something like this for ten minutes," Bob panted, "you feel you'd like to use it on the author!

If Leslie Charteris were here now . . . . ."

Mr. Charteris, however, was probably sitting happily in the sunshine somewhere, dreaming up new difficulties for actors who might have to portray his characters! Bob Brown therefore contented himself with sinking into a studio chair to get his breath back while actor-director Roger Moore lined up the next shot.

Next on the list of old friends again teaming with Roger was Patrick Westwood, playing the health store-chemist Osbett, and appearing for a second time in "The Saint." The first time was as a Middle East army officer, Major Hussein, in "The Wonderful War," a part that switched his career from Hollywood to England.

Pat had been working in Hollywood for several years, and was with Roger Moore there in "The Miracle," "The Alaskans" and "Maverick." Then he returned home to see his family and was on the point of returning to Hollywood when Roger asked him to appear in "The Wonderful War." Pat has been working in England ever since.

To add to this gathering of the clans, there is Conrad Phillips. Roger brought him up from Devonshire, where he now runs an hotel and messes around with boats, to play the part of the naval base surgeon.

Though they have never actually worked in a film or TV show before this, Roger and Con Phillips have been friends for many a year and, as it happened, Con was also one of Fabia Drake's RADA pupils. The two actors recently went on a personal appearance junket together to Egypt, where they joined forces for stage and TV appearances. Roger went to promote "The Saint"; Con Phillips because of his popularity as television's "William Tell," the series that brought him fame.

Both stars, incidentally, are puzzled by the fan mail they have been receiving from Czechoslovakia. Week after week, piles of letters pour in from viewers who have watched "The Saint" and "The Adventures of William Tell." Yet neither series has been transmitted in Czechoslovakia. The only explanation is that young viewers there tune into stations in Poland or Hungary, where both series are big hits.

More from "The Saint" set next month!

the black grippe

by Edgar Wallace

DR. HEREFORD BEVAN was looking thoughtfully at a small Cape rabbit; the rabbit took not the slightest notice of Dr. Hereford Bevan. It crouched on a narrow bench, nibbling at a mess of crushed mealies and seemed perfectly content with its lot, in spite of the fact that the bench was situated in the experimental laboratory of the Jackson Institute of Tropical Medicines.

In the young principal's hand was a long porcelain rod with which from time to time he menaced the unconscious feeder, without, however, producing so much as a single shiver of apprehension. With his long ears pricked, his sensitive nostrils quivering—he was used to the man-smell of Hereford Bevan by now—and his big black eyes staring unwinkingly ahead, there was little in the appearance of the rabbit to suggest abnormal condition.

For the third time in a quarter of an hour Bevan raised the rod as though to strike the animal across the nose, and for the third time lowered the rod again.

Nigel Morland, writing in England earlier this year, quotes Edgar Wallace, shortly before his death, as wondering what people would say if he was to die. "One lot of headlines, and they'd forget me. I'm only a hack, an entertainer, and no more." While it is true that many of his contemporaries have been forgotten, there are few today who do not know him for one of the all-time greats in this field. Here is another Wallace however, with this story of five and a half days lost by London — days of terror, and of hope.

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Then with a sigh he lifted the little beast by the ears and carried him, struggling and squirming, to a small hutch, put him in very gently, and closed the wire-netted door.

He stood staring at the tiny inmate and fetched a long sigh. Then he left the laboratory and walked down to the staff study.

Stuart Gold, his assistant, sat at a big desk, pipe in mouth, checking some calculations. He looked up as Bevan came in.

"Well," he said, "what has Bunny done?"

"Bunny is feeding like a pig," said Bevan, irritably.

"No change?"

Bevan shook his head and looked at his watch.

"What time——" he began.

"The boat train was in ten minutes ago," said Stuart Gold. "I have been on the 'phone to Waterloo. He may be here at any minute now."

Bevan walked up and down the apartment, his hands thrust into his trousers pockets, his chin on his breast.

Presently he walked to the window and looked out at the busy street. Motor-buses were rumbling past in an endless procession. The sidewalks were crowded with pedestrians, for this was the busiest thoroughfare in the West End of London and it was the hour of the day when the offices were absorbing their slaves.

As he looked, a taxi drew up opposite the door and a man sprang out with all the agility of youth, though the iron-grey whiskers about his chin and the seamed red face placed him amongst the sixties.

"It is he!" cried Hereford Bevan, and dashed from the room to welcome the visitor, taking the portmanteau from his hand.

"It is awfully good of you to come, professor," he said, shaking the traveller warmly by the hand. "Ever since I telegraphed I have been scared sick for fear I brought you on a fool's errand."

"Nonsense," said the elder man, sharply; "I was coming to Europe anyway and I merely advanced my date of sailing. I'd sooner come by the *Mauretania* than the slow packet by which I had booked. How are you? You are looking bright."

Hereford Bevan led the newcomer to the study and introduced him to Gold.

Professor Van de Bergh was one of those elderly men who never grow old. His blue eye was as clear as it had been on his twentieth birthday, his sensitive mouth was as ready to smile as ever it had been in the flower of his youth. A professor of pathology, a great anatomist, and

one of the foremost bacteriologists in the United States, Bevan's doubts and apprehensions were perhaps justified, though he was relieved in mind to discover that he had merely accelerated the great man's departure from New York and was not wholly responsible for a trip which might end in disappointment.

"Now," said Van der Bergh, spreading his coat-tails and drawing his chair to the little fire, "just give me a second to light my pipe and tell me all your troubles."

He puffed away for a few seconds, blew out the match carefully and threw it into the grate, then before Bevan could speak he said:

"I presume that the epidemic of January has scared you?"

Hereford Bevan nodded.

"Well," said the professor, reflectively. "I don't wonder. The 1918 epidemic was bad enough. I am not calling it influenza, because I think very few of us are satisfied to affix that wild label to a devastating disease which appeared in the most mysterious fashion, took its toll, and disappeared as rapidly and mysteriously."

He scratched his beard, staring out of the window.

"I haven't heard any theory about that epidemic which has wholly satisfied me," he said. "People talk glibly of carriers' of 'infection,' but who infected the wild tribes in the centre of Africa on the very day that whole communities of Eskimos were laid low in parts of the Arctic regions which were absolutely isolated from the rest of the world?"

Bevan shook his head.

"That is the mystery that I have never solved," he said, "and never hope to."

"I wouldn't say that," said the professor, shaking his head. "I am always hoping to get on the track of first causes, however baffling they may be. Anyway, I am not satisfied to describe that outbreak as influenza, and it really does not matter what label we give to it for the moment. You might as truly call it the Plague or the Scourge. Now let's get down to the epidemic of this year. I should like to compare notes with you because I have always found that the reports of this Institute are above suspicion. I suppose it has been suggested to you," he went on, "that the investigation of this particular disease is outside the province of tropical medicines?"

Stuart Gold laughed.

"We are reminded of that every day," he said dryly.

"Now just tell me what happened in January of this year," said the professor.

Dr. Bevan seated himself at

the table, pulled open a drawer, and took out a black-covered exercise book.

"I'll tell you briefly," he said, "and without attempting to produce statistics. On the 18th January, as near three o'clock in the afternoon as makes no difference, the second manifestation of this disease attacked this country, and, so far as can be ascertained, the whole of the Continent."

The professor nodded.

"What were the symptoms?" he asked.

"People began to cry—that is to say, their eyes filled with water and they felt extremely uncomfortable for about a quarter of an hour. So far as I can discover the crying period did not last much more than a quarter of an hour, in some cases a much shorter time."

Again the professor nodded.

"That is what happened in New York," he said, "and this symptom was followed about six hour later by a slight rise of temperature, shivering, and a desire for sleep."

"Just the same sort of thing happened here," said Bevan, "and in the morning everybody was as well as they had been the previous morning, and the fact that it had occurred might have been overlooked but for the observation made in various hospitals. Gold and I were both stricken at the same time. We both took blood and succeeded in isolating the germs."

The professor jumped up.

"Then you are the only people who have it," he said, "nobody else in the world seems to have taken that precaution."

Stuart Gold lifted a big bell-shaped glass cover from a microscope, took from a locked case a thin microscopic slide, and inserted it in the holder. He adjusted the lens, switched on a shaded light behind the instrument, and beckoned the professor forward.

"Here it is, sir," he said.

Professor Van der Bergh glued his eye to the instrument and looked for a long time.

"Perfect," he said. "I have never seen this fellow before. It looks rather like a trypanosome."

"That's what I told Bevan," said Stuart Gold.

The professor was still looking.

"It is like and it is unlike," he said. "Of course, it is absurd to suggest that you've all had an attack of sleeping sickness, which you undoubtedly would have had if this had been a trypanosome, but surely this bug is a new one to me!"

He walked back to his chair, puffing thoughtfully at his pipe.

"What did you do?"

"I made a culture," said Bevan, "and infected six South African rabbits. In an hour they developed the first symptoms. Their

eyes watered for the prescribed time, their temperature rose six hours later, and in the morning they were all well."

"Why South African rabbits?" asked Van der Bergh, curiously.

"Because they develop secondary symptoms of any disease at twice the rate of a human being—at least that has been my experience," explained Bevan. "I found it by accident whilst I was in Grahamstown, in South Africa, and it has been a very useful piece of knowledge to me. When I wired to you I had no idea there were going to be any further developments. I merely wanted to make you acquainted with the bug—"

The professor looked up sharply.

"Have there been further developments? he asked, and Bevan nodded.

"Five days ago," he said, speaking slowly, "the second symptom appeared. I will show you."

He led the way back to the laboratory, went to the little hutch, and lifted the twisting, struggling rabbit to the bench under a blaze of electric light. The professor felt the animal gingerly.

"He has no temperature," he said, "and looks perfectly normal. What is the matter with him?"

Bevan lifted the little beast and held his head towards the light.

"Do you notice anything?" he asked.

"Good heavens!" said Van der Bergh; "he's blind!"

Bevan nodded.

"He's been blind for five days," he said.

"But——" Van der Bergh stared at him. "Do you mean——"

Bevan nodded.

"I mean, that when the secondary symptom comes, and it should come in a fortnight from today——"

He stopped.

He had replaced the animal upon the bench and had put out his hand to stroke his ears when suddenly the rabbit groped back from him. Again he reached out his hand and again the animal made a frantic attempt to escape.

"He sees now," said the professor.

"Wait," said Bevan.

He took down a board to which a paper was pinned, looked at his watch, and jotted a note.

"Thank God for that," he said; "the blindness lasts for exactly one hundred and twenty hours."

"But do you mean," asked Van der Bergh, with an anxious little frown, "that the whole world is going blind for five days?"

"That is my theory," replied the other.

"Phew!" said the professor,

and mopped his face with a large and gaudy handkerchief.

They went back without another word to the study and Van der Bergh began his technical test. For his information sheet after sheet of data were placed before him. Records of temperature of diet and the like were scanned and compared, whilst Bevan made his way to another laboratory to examine the remaining rabbits.

He returned as the professor finished.

"They can all see," he said; "I inspected them this morning and they were as blind as bats."

Presently the professor finished.

"I am going down to our Embassy," he said, "and the best thing you boys can do is to see some representative of your Government. Let me see, Sir Douglas Sexton is your big man, isn't he?"

Bevan made a wry face.

"He is the medical gentleman who has the ear of the Government," he said, "but he is rather an impossible person. He's one of the old school——"

"I know that school," said the professor, grimly, "it's a school where you learn nothing and forget nothing. Still, it's your duty to warn him."

Bevan nodded and turned to Stuart Gold.

"Will you cancel my lecture, Gold?" he said; "let Cartwright take the men through that demonstration I gave yesterday. I'll go down and see Sexton though he wither me!"

Sir Douglas Sexton had a large house in a very large square. He was so well-off that he could afford a shabby butler. That shrunken man shook his head when Dr. Bevan made his inquiry.

"I don't think Sir Douglas will see you, sir," he said. "He has a consultation in half an hour's time and he is in his library, with orders that he is not to be disturbed in any circumstances."

"This is a very vital matter and I simply must see Sir Douglas," said Bevan, firmly.

The butler was gone for some time and presently returned to usher the caller into a large and gloomy room, where Sir Douglas sat surrounded by open books.

He greeted Bevan with a scowl, for the younger school were not popular with the Sextonians.

"Really, it is most inconvenient, doctor, for you to see me at this moment," he complained, "I suppose you want to ask about the Government grant to the Jackson Institute. I was speaking to the Prime Minister yesterday and he did not seem at all inclined to agree to spend the country's money——"

"I haven't come about the

grant, Sir Douglas," replied Bevan, "but a matter of much greater importance."

In as few words as possible he gave the result of his experiment, and on the face of Sir Douglas Sexton was undisguised incredulity.

"Come, come," he said, when Dr. Bevan had finished, and permitted his heavy features to relax into a smile. "Now, that sort of stuff is all very well for the Press if you want to make a sensation and advertise your name, but surely you are not coming to me, a medical man, and a medical man, moreover, in the confidence of the Government and the Ministry of Health, with a story of that kind! Of course, there was some sort of epidemic, I admit, on the 18th. I myself suffered a little inconvenience, but I think that phenomena could be explained by the sudden change of wind from the south-west to the north-east and the corresponding drop in temperature. You may have noticed that the temperature dropped six degrees that morning."

"I am not bothering about the cause of the epidemic," said Bevan, patiently. "I am merely giving you, Sir Douglas, a rough account of what form the second epidemic will take."

Sir Douglas smiled.

"And do you expect me," he asked with acerbity, "to go to the Prime Minister of England and tell him that in fourteen days the whole of the world is going blind? My dear good man, if you published that sort of story you would scare the people to death and set back the practice of medicine a hundred years! Why, we should all be discredited!"

"Do you think that if I saw the Prime Minister——" began Bevan, and Sir Douglas stiffened.

"If you know the Prime Minister or have any friends who could introduce you," he said, shortly, "I have not the slightest objection to you seeing him. I can only warn you that the Prime Minister is certain to send for me and that I should give an opinion which would be directly contrary to yours. I think you have made a very grave error, Dr. Bevan, and if you were to take the trouble to kill one of your precious rabbits and dissect it you would discover another cause for this blindness."

"The opinion of Dr. Van der Bergh," began Bevan, and Sir Douglas snorted.

"I really cannot allow an American person to teach me my business," he said. "I have nothing to say against American medicines or American surgery, and there are some very charming people in America—I am sure this must be the case. And now, doctor, if you will excuse——"

He turned pointedly to his books and Bevan went out.

For seven days three men worked most earnestly to enlist the attention of the authorities. They might have given the story to the Press and created a sensation, but neither Bevan nor Van der Bergh favoured this method. Eminent doctors who were consulted took views which were extraordinarily different. Some came to the laboratories to examine the records. Others "pooh-poohed" the whole idea.

"Have you any doubt on the matter yourself?" asked the professor, and Bevan hesitated.

"The only doubt I have, sir," he said, "is whether my calculations as to the time are accurate. I have noticed in previous experiments with these rabbits the disease develops about twice as fast as in the human body, but I am far from satisfied that this rule is invariable."

Van der Bergh nodded.

"My Embassy has wired the particulars to Washington," he said, "and Washington takes a very serious view of your discovery. They are making whatever preparations they can."

He went back to his hotel, promising to call on the morrow. Bevan worked all that day testing the blood of his little subjects, working out tables of reaction, and it was nearly four o'clock when he went to bed.

He slept that night in his room at the Institute. He was a good sleeper, and after winding the clock and drawing down the blind he jumped into bed and in less than five minutes was sound asleep. He awoke with the subconscious feeling that he had slept his usual allowance and was curiously alive and awake. The room was in pitch darkness and he remembered with a frown that he had not gone to bed until four o'clock in the morning. He could not have slept two hours.

He put out his hand and switched on the light to discover the time. Apparently the light was not working.

On his bedside table was a box of matches, his cigarette holder, and his cigarettes. He took the box, struck a light, but nothing happened. He threw away the match and struck another—still nothing happened.

He held the faithless match in his hand and suddenly felt a strange warmth at his fingertips. Then with a cry he dropped the match—it had burnt his fingers!

Slowly he put his legs over the edge of the bed and stood up, groping his way to the window and releasing the spring-blind. The darkness was still complete. He strained his eyes but could not even see the silhouette of the

window-frame against the night. Then a church-bell struck the hour . . . nine, ten, eleven, twelve!

Twelve o'clock! It was impossible that it could be twelve o'clock at night. He gasped. Twelve midday and dark!

He searched for his clothes and began to dress. His window was open, yet from the outside came no sound of traffic. London was silent—as silent as the grave.

His window looked out upon the busy thoroughfare in which the Jackson Institute was situated, but there was not so much as the clink of a wheel or the sound of a pedestrian's foot.

He dressed awkwardly, slipping on his boots and lacing them quickly, then groped his way to the door and opened it. A voice outside greeted him. It was the voice of Gold.

"Is that you, Bevan?"

"Yes, it is I, what the dickens —" and then the realization of the catastrophe which had fallen upon the world came to him.

"Blind!" he whispered. "We're all blind!"

Gold had been shell-shocked in the war and was subject to nerve-storms. Presently Bevan heard his voice whimpering hysterically.

"Blind!" he repeated. "What a horrible thing!"

"Steady yourself!" said Bevan, sternly. "It has come! But its only for five days, Gold. Now don't lose your nerve!"

"Oh, I shan't lose my nerve!" said Gold, in a shaky voice. "Only it is rather awful, isn't it? Awful, awful! My God! It's awful!"

"Come down to the study!" said Bevan. "Don't forget the two steps leading down to the landing. There are twenty-four stairs, Gold. Count 'em!"

He was halfway down the stairs when he heard somebody sobbing at the foot and recognized the voice of the old housekeeper who attended to the resident staff. She was whimpering and wailing.

"Shut up!" he said, savagely. "What are you making that infernal row about?"

"Oh sir," she moaned. "I can't see! I can't see!"

"Nobody can see or will see for five days! said Bevan. "Keep your nerve, Mrs. Moreland."

He found his way to the study. He had scarcely reached the room before he heard a thumping on the door which led from the street to the staff quarters. Carefully he manœuvred his way into the hall again, came to the door, and unlocked it.

"Halloa," said a cheery voice outside, "is this the Jackson Institute?"

"Thank God you're safe, professor. You took a risk in coming round."

The professor came in with slow, halting footsteps, and Bevan shut the door behind him.

"You know your way, I'll put my hand on your shoulder, if you don't mind," said Van der Bergh. "Luckily I took the trouble to remember the route. I've been two hours getting here. Ouch?"

"Are you hurt?" asked Bevan.

"I ran against an infernal motor-bus in the middle of the street. It had been left stranded," said the professor. "I think the blindness is general."

Stuart had stumbled into the room soon after them, had found a chair and sat down upon it.

"Now," said Van der Bergh, briskly, "you've got to find your way to your Government offices and interview somebody in authority. There's going to be hell in the world for the next five days. I hope your calculations are not wrong in that respect, Bevan!"

Hereford Bevan said nothing.

"It is very awkward!" it was Gold's quivering voice that spoke, "but, of course, it'll be all right in a day or two."

"I hope so," said the professor's grim voice. "If it's for five days little harm will be done, but—but if it's for ten days!"

Bevan's heart sank at the doubt in the old man's voice.

"If it's for ten days?" he repeated.

"The whole world will be dead," said the professor solemnly, and there was a deep silence.

"Dead?" whispered Gold and Van der Bergh swung round towards the voice.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Shell-shock," muttered Bevan under his breath, and the old man's voice took on a softer note.

"Not all of us, perhaps," he said, "but the least intelligent. Don't you realize what has happened and what will happen? The world is going to starve. We are a blind world, and how shall we find food?"

A thrill of horror crept up Bevan's spine as he realized for the first time just what world-blindness meant.

"All the trains have stopped," the professor went on; "I've been figuring it out in my room this morning just what it means. There are blind men in the signal boxes and blind men on the engines. All transport has come to a standstill. How are you going to get the food to the people? In a day's time the shops, if the people can reach them, will be sold out and it will be impossible to replenish the local stores. You can neither milk nor reap. All the great power-stations are at a standstill. There is no local coal being got

out of the mines. Wait, where is your telephone?"

Bevan fumbled for the instrument and passed it in the direction of the professor's voice. A pause, then:

"Take it back," said the professor, "of course, that will not be working. The exchange cannot see!"

Bevan heard a methodical puff-puff and the scent of tobacco came to him, and somehow this brought him comfort. The professor was smoking.

He rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Put your hand on my shoulder, professor, and Gold, take hold of the professor's coat or something."

"Where are you going?" asked Van der Bergh.

"To the kitchen," said Bevan; "there's some food there and I'm starving."

The meal consisted in the main of dry bread, biscuits and cheese, washed down by water. Then Hereford Bevan began his remarkable pilgrimage.

He left the house, and keeping touch with the railings on his right, reached first Cockspur Street and then Whitehall. Halfway along the latter thoroughfare he thumped into a man and, putting out his hand, felt embossed buttons.

"Halloa," he said, "a policeman?"

"That's right, sir," said a voice; "I've been here since the morning. You're in Whitehall. What has happened, sir? Do you know?"

"It is a temporary blindness which has come upon everybody," said Bevan, speaking quickly. "I am a doctor. Now, constable, you are to tell your friends if you meet them and everybody you do meet that it is only temporary."

"I'm not likely to meet anybody," said the constable. "I've been standing here hardly daring to move since it came."

"What time did it happen?"

"About ten o'clock, as near as I can remember," said the policeman.

"How far from here is Downing Street?"

The constable hesitated.

"I don't know where we are," he said, "but it can't be very far."

Two hours' diligent search, two hours of groping and of stumbling two hours of discussing with frantic men and women whom he met on the way, brought him to Downing Street.

That journey along Whitehall would remain in his mind a horrible memory for all his days. He heard oaths and sobbings. He heard the wild jabberings of somebody—whether it was man or woman he could not say—who had gone mad under the stress of the calamity, and he came to

Downing Street as the clock struck three.

He might have passed the Prime Minister's house but he heard voices and recognized one as that of Sexton.

The great man was moaning his trouble to somebody who spoke in a quiet unemotional voice.

"Halloa, Sexton!"

Bevan stumbled towards, and collided with, the great physician.

"Who is it?" said Sexton.

"It is Hereford Bevan."

"It's the man, Prime Minister, the doctor I spoke to you about."

A cool hand took Bevan's.

"Come this way," said the voice; "you had better stay, Sexton, you'll never find your way back."

Bevan found himself led through what he judged to be a large hall and then suddenly his feet struck a heavy carpet.

"I think there's a chair behind you," said the new voice, "sit down and tell me all about it."

Dr. Bevan spoke for ten minutes, his host merely injecting a question here and there.

"It can last only for five days," said the voice, with a quiver of emotion, "and we can only last out that five days. You know, of course, that the food supply has stopped. There is no way of averting this terrible tragedy. Can you make a suggestion?"

"Yes, sir," said Bevan. "There are a number of blind institutes throughout the country. Get in touch with them and let their trained men organize the business of industry. I think it could be done."

There was a pause.

"It might be done," said the voice. "Happily the telegraphs are working satisfactorily, as messages can be taken by sound. The wireless is also working and your suggestion shall be carried out."

The days that followed were days of nightmare, days when men groped and stumbled in an unknown world, shrieking for food. On the evening of the second day the water supply failed. The pumping stations had ceased to work. Happily it rained and people were able to collect water in their mackintosh coats.

Dr. Bevan made several excursions a day and in one of these he met another bold adventurer who told him that part of the Strand was on fire. Somebody had upset a lamp without noticing the fact. The doctor made his way towards the Strand but was forced to turn back by the clouds of pungent smoke which met him.

He and his informant (he was

a butcher from Smithfield) locked arms and made their way back to the Institute. By some mischance they took a wrong turning and might have been irretrievably lost but they found a guardian angel in the shape of a woman against whom they blundered.

"The Jackson Institute?" she said. "Oh yes, I can lead you there,"

She walked with unfaltering footsteps and with such decision that the doctor thought she had been spared the supreme affliction. He asked her this and she laughed.

"Oh, no," she said, cheerfully. "You see, I've been blind all my life. The Government has put us on point duty at various places to help people who have lost their way."

She told them that, according to her information, big fires were raging in half-a-dozen parts of London. She had heard of no railway collisions and the Prime Minister told her—

"Told you?" said Bevan in surprise, and again she laughed.

"I've met him before, you see," she said. "I am Lord Selbury's daughter. Lillian Selbury."

Bevan remembered the name. It is curious that he had pictured her, for all the beauty of her voice, as a sad, middle-aged woman. She took his hand in hers and they walked slowly towards his house.

"You'll think I'm horrid if I say I am enjoying this," she said, "and yet I am. It's so lovely to be able to pity others! Of course, it is very dreadful and it's beginning to frighten me a little, and then there's nobody to tell me how pretty I am, because nobody can see. That is rather a drawback, isn't it?" and she laughed again.

"What does the Government think about this?"

"They are terribly upset," she said, in a graver tone; "you see, they cannot get at the people—they are so used to depending on the newspapers, but there are no newspapers now, and if there were nobody could read them. They have just stopped—You step down from the kerb here and walk twenty-five paces and step up again. We are crossing Whitehall Gardens. They have wonderful faith in this Dr. Bevan."

Hereford Bevan felt himself going red.

"I hope their faith is justified," he said, grimly; "I happen to be the wonderful doctor."

He felt her fingers grip him in an uncontrollable spasm of surprise.

"Are you really?" she said,

with a new note of interest. "Listen!"

They stopped, and he heard the tinkle of a bell.

"That is one of our people from St. Mildreds," she said; "the Government is initiating a system of town-criers. It is the only way we can get news to the people."

Bevan listened and heard the sing-song voice of the crier but could not distinguish what he said. The girl led him to his house and there left him. He felt her hand running down his right arm and wondered why until she took his hand and shook it.

Old Professor Van der Bergh roared a greeting as he came into the room.

"Is that you, Bevan?" he asked. "I've got a knuckle of cold ham here, but be careful how you cut it, otherwise you're going to slice your fingers."

He and Stuart Gold had spent the day feeding the various specimens in the laboratory. The fourth day dawned and in the afternoon came a knock at the door. It was the girl.

"I've been ordered to place myself at your disposal, Dr. Bevan," she said; "the Government may need you."

He spent that day wandering through deserted streets with the girl at his side, and as the hundred and twentieth hour approached he found himself looking forward, not so much to the end of the tragic experience which he shared with the world, but to seeing with his own eyes the face of this guide of his. He had slept the clock round and just before ten struck he made his way to the street. He heard Big Ben boom the hour and waited for light, but no light came. Another hour passed and yet another, and his soul was seized with blind panic. Suppose sight never returned, suppose his experiments were altogether wrong and that what happened in the case of the rabbits did not happen to Man! Suppose the blindness was permanent! He groaned at the thought.

The girl was with him, her arm in his, throughout that day. His nerves were breaking, and somehow she sensed this fact and comforted him as a mother might comfort a child. She led him into the park with sure footsteps and walked him up and down, trying to distract his mind from the horror with which it was oppressed.

In the afternoon he was sent for to the Cabinet Council and again told the story of his experiments.

"The hundred and twenty hours are passed, are they not,

doctor?" said the Premier's voice.

"Yes, sir," replied Bevan in a low voice, "but it is humanly impossible to be sure that that is the exact time."

No other question was asked him but the terror of his audience came back to him like an aura and shrivelled his very heart.

He did not lie down as was his wont that night, but wandered out alone into the streets of London. It must have been two o'clock in the morning when he came back to find the girl standing on the step talking with Van der Bergh.

She came towards him at the sound of his voice.

"There is another Cabinet meeting, doctor," she said, "will you come with me?"

"I hope I haven't kept you long," he said, brokenly. His voice was husky and so unlike his own that she was startled.

"You're not to take this to heart, Dr. Bevan," she said, severely, as they began their pilgrimage to Whitehall. "There's a terrible task waiting for the world which has to be faced."

"Wait, wait!" he said, hoarsely, and gripped the rail with one hand and her arm with the other.

Was it imagination? It was still dark, a fine drizzle of rain was falling, but the blackness was drappled with tones of less blackness. There was a dark, straight thing before him, something that seemed to hang in the centre of his eye, and a purple shape beyond, and he knew he was looking at a London street, at a London lamp-post with eyes that saw. Black London, London devoid of light, London whose streets were packed with motionless vehicles that stood just where they had stopped on the day the darkness fell, London with groping figures half mad with joy, shrieking and sobbing their relief—he drew a long breath.

"What is it? What is it?" said the girl in a frightened voice.

"I can see! I can see!" said Bevan in a whisper.

"Can you?" she said, wistfully. "I—I am so glad. And now—"

He was near to tears and his arms went about her. He fumbled in his pocket for a match and struck a light. That blessed light he saw, and saw, too, the pale spiritual face turned up to his.

"I can see you," he whispered again. "My God! You're the most beautiful thing I have ever seen!"

London slept from sheer force of habit and awoke with the grey dawn to see—to look out

upon a world that had been lost for five and a half days, but in the night all the forces of the law and the Crown had been working at feverish pace, railways had dragged their drivers from their beds, carriers and stokers had been collected by the police, and slowly the wheels of life were turning again, and a humble world, grateful for the restoration of its greatest gift, hungered in patience and was happy.

A PERSONAL ASIDE

We are living in times in which violence—not only mob violence, but also individual violence, purposeless violence, "just for kicks"—has become an acknowledged aspect of our way of life in our cities. This, it must be added, is a sickness which crosses ethnic and social lines, and it is this reality which must be faced.

This and the reluctance of good people to intervene.

Time and time again we run into instances of this group-fear, this apathy, this readiness to close both eyes and ears to public evil rather than risk involvement. Dr. Frederic Wertham, one of the foremost clinical and criminal psychiatrists in the country, has termed this "the most important phenomenon in our society today", and while it is true that in many instances this failure to intervene when face to face with violence may be traced to the genuine indifference of the onlookers ("They have become callous and unconcerned", as Dr. Wertham puts it), there is also this element of fear—a gnawing personal fear.

"Twenty horrified onlookers made no move to intervene", for instance, when a man was stabbed on the subway the other day. In another instance, another twenty-thirty people watched a group of teenagers as they mugged an elderly woman. In still another instance, cowed passengers in a subway train watched while a man who had just killed another "kept roaming back and forth, the blood still dripping from the knife".

Hundreds of passers by on Broadway either kept walking or stopped to watch, as four leather-jeketed teenagers savagely beat a middle-aged Brooklyn Rabbi whom they accosted. This did not happen at midnight, mind you, but at eight o'clock at night, recently, outside the Hotel Astor.

I have myself seen that sort of thing happen in that area, that early in the evening. I have myself seen good people, undoubtedly law-abiding, undoubtedly good church goers, avert their eyes as they passed rather than intervene in what might, in a matter of seconds, flare up into a knifing.

This, I repeat, is not only indifference.

This is fear.

We are in other words living in times when once more, as would have been the case a hundred and fifty years ago, the streets that we know are dangerous streets. When you add to this the admitted public indifference to the reality of organized crime's influence upon the lives of tens of thousands who do not know what those words actually mean, and when you sit in a darkened theater and listen to people laughing as Alec Guinness, portraying the late Dylan Thomas, is slowly and painfully killing himself, you begin to wonder if we have reason to remember the story of what happened to Lot's wife. . . .

Is history repeating itself?

H.S.S.

escape to sonoita

by James A. Howard

THE LIGHT WAS SO bright it was no longer white, but an ash-grey mass pressing at the sweating bodies of the two men. Like a huge thermal wine press, it seemed intent on wringing the last drop of moisture from them. Salt-reddened eyes tried to dodge the impact of the desert light, but no matter where they looked it was there, lancing at them from the floor of Hell's Basin.

"How's the engine temperature?" the kid asked.

"Gettin' up. She'll boil in a minute or two." It was a laconic voice, not really involved with the leathery throat from which is issued. "We better stop and fill the radiator before the engine seizes up."

"That'd be just great!" the young voice sneered. "Get stuck out here with a burned-up engine and have to walk out. Maybe you'd like it, but I don't want to die that way."

"Nobody's talkin' about dyin'." The old man lifted his foot from the accelerator and let the soft sand in the deep ruts clutch at the tires and slow the heavy tanker down.

"You should have had that

James A. Howard is a Clinical Psychologist, now practising in Minnesota, who has lived in the Southwest where this story is laid — and where the isolation, the heat, and the nearness of death, are ever-present realities. Dr. Howard, a former college professor, is the author of several novels.

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radiator fixed before we made this run."

The reply was a grunt. The old man swung the door wide, trying to get air into the cab before the forward motion was completely lost. "Sure wish there was some shade to stop in——cool down a lot faster."

"Shade? You're dreamin', man. There ain't nothin' ahead of us but another eighty-five miles of this stinkin' desert, then fifty miles of mountain track that'll pull the guts out of this old heap——even without an overheatin' engine."

The heavy tanker shuddered to a bucking halt, jerking spasmodically as the sand clutched at the tires. With the last lunge, the old man took his eyes from the one rutted track.

"You don't like this part of the country, do you, Bill?"

"Like it? I *love* it. I think it's great to have sunlight rip through your skull, and heat that makes you wonder if your face is still there. And the scenery——where else can you see those beautiful cactus and all that well-kept mesquite?"

It was a long gaze the old man gave him, looking at Bill's hard-cut, sweat-streaked face. The young man's eyes were sharp, his wiry black hair was cropped close to his skull, with the forelock, like an oil-soaked toothbrush, standing out in front of the band of the straw Stetson cocked on the back of his head.

The driver broke the gaze, then swung his long, stringy body out of the tractor and on to the ground five feet below. Bill opened the right hand door, stood on the scaling step for a moment, then reached for the grab rail. It seemed red hot, and he let go too soon, hitting the ground at an awkward angle and having to run, off-balance, for a few steps. He cursed himself, ashamed that he couldn't better control the six feet of young body he was proud to have.

He moved to the front of the truck and climbed on the bumper. Like many desert vehicles, the hood had been removed for better cooling. Bill pulled his bandanna from his hip pocket, wrapped it around his hand and twisted off the radiator cap. A geyser of steam and rusty water spewed up and over the engine. The idling fan blades threw the hot rusty water back into his face.

The old man had come to the front of the tanker with one of the water bags. When the top steam had been blown out of the radiator, he stepped up on to the fender, pulled the cork from the bag and slowly poured the radiator full. The cooling engine quieted its hammering as the water found its way into the block. Then the old man stepped

off the fender and up into the cab, twisting the key and letting the engine die.

"She got pretty hot, Bill. We'd better take a break and let the old girl cool off before them pistons swell up and we have to walk out from here." He stepped down from the cab and trailed the young man back to the shade of the tanker, sitting down easily, lithely, and in one motion. He shoved his greasy hat back on his head, then held out the water bag to the muscular youth who sat in the dust beside him.

Bill took the water bag, drinking noisily and letting the water gush down his throat. Then he passed it back. The older man took the bag and drank easily, two tiny rivulets running a stream in the grooves of his chin and falling on to his chest. He took a bandanna and soaked it, washing across his face and the back of his neck.

"How do you stand it, Charlie?" The words had the sound of a man who is forced to question his own strength. "This desert, the heat, the everlastin' trouble with worn-out equipment and one-lane rut tracks?"

Charlie's eyes were bright blue, standing out in his face like the studs in a jewelled leather belt. "It's my job," he said simply. "I've been haulin loads to people out here since I was thirteen – whatever they needed. People depend on me. They know I'll bring 'em what they gotta have."

"Some job," the young man said. "Hell, they need drivers in other places, too . . . places where there's trees, and water, and good roads. You sure must hate yourself–– to pick the desert."

Charlie let his eyes sweep the floor of the desert and climb towards the distant, shimmering mountains. "Desert ain't easy, Bill. There ain't no argument about that––but she's fair. You learn to work with her gentle, like you would with a woman, and she'll show you everything you ever wondered about." He looked back at the young man. "If you want, you can quit when we get back to Aguila, and no hard feelings."

There was no reply. Bill took another long pull from the water bag, took off his hat and dumped a splash of the water over his close-cropped hair. Handing the bag back to the old man, he stood up and leaned against the side of the tanker. "How'd you let Maxwell Oil stick you with this old truck?" he asked. "She was shot thirty thousand miles ago."

"It'll do for me."

"Ain't you ever gonna get her repainted––get that Maxwell Oil sign covered up?"

"If I ever get around to it."

"Just like getting the radiator rodded out, huh? It's got to wait until you figure you can go three days without taking a load to some guy who's tryin' to scratch a livin' out of this overheated sandbox." He sensed that his words were hurting the old man, but he couldn't help himself. "So you go on advertising for Maxwell Oil and don't get a nickel out of them."

The old man came up to his feet. He took another long drink from the canvas bag. The sides were nearly together. "Want more?" he asked. "Maybe I should fill a swimming pool for you? So that you could stop belly-achin' about the heat?"

This was an old man, but there was something of relaxed readiness in him that held the young man's temper in check. For a moment it was an awkward feeling, then he passed it off as a joke. "Why not?" he asked. "You sure got a hell of a big beach."

The joke wasn't heard. Charlie was looking back along the single set of ruts stretching behind the tanker. A cloud of dust, moving rapidly and closing with them, was holding the older man's attention. "They're drivin' too fast on this stuff," he said. "All that sand and these ruts could give them real trouble. It must be a couple of tenderfeet . . . probably lost."

"They better slow down before they catch up with us, or they'll really hit sand trying to go around." Bill looked at the rising cloud. "They been lost for quite a spell— it must be forty miles back to the highway, ain't it?"

"More like twenty or twenty-five."

The rolling dust came on without slowing speed, hanging in the heat-shimmery air like a grey plume. Then the car was on them. The driver twisted the wheel sharply to escape the rutted track. The heavy Pontiac lifted clear of the ruts, hit soft sand and began to heel over.

The driver was no stranger to skids. He was off the brake and on the accelerator, whipping the rear end into line and turning in the direction of the skid. But for a sharp outcropping of rock some twenty feet from the road he'd have made it. Sharp stone raked into the times, and when the tire blew the rim hit rock, gave way, and dropped the car on to the top of the rock with a nerve-scraping screech.

Charlie and Bill were across the fifty yards of desert by the time the car had stopped rocking. Bill seized the door handle and wrenched it open, looking at the people inside. His face showed bafflement as he saw the young child in the rear seat. He

had time only to see the adhesive tape across her face and the unnatural position in which she lay. Then his eyes were no longer so baffled. They were drawn back to a small hole a foot or so from his chest——the muzzle of the gun a small, dark-skinned man was pointing at him.

The man made a slight gesture with the gun. You two just move back a little. Don't try to be heroes and you won't get hurt."

When Charlie had taken Bill's arm and pulled him back a few feet, the small man turned the remainder of the distance on the seat, allowing his feet to hang over the edge, then slid to his feet on the sand beside the car. The gun didn't waver from the two men. "How's the brat, Larry?" he said, tossing the words over his shoulder.

A fat, oily man with a florid face turned in the seat. "She got shook up a little, that's all."

"Then get out and take a look at the car. What'll take to fix it?"

It didn't take long for the report to come back. One sight of the crushed wheel and the pool of brake fluid gathering on the rock that had shattered the rear end told all that needed telling.

"We've had it, Tony. The wheel's shot."

"Then put on the spare, idiot."

"No good. The axle's broke and the brakes are gone." The fat man came around the car and faced the two truckers. "Your damn rig in the road's what did it. We had to take the slide. I oughta burn you down right where you stand!" He started to reach for his hip pocket.

Tony made an impatient gesture. "You're supposed to be a good wheel man——don't blame the rubes for puttin' us in a bind." The gun swung to Charlie, training on his belt buckle. "You, pop——how far is it to the border?"

Charlie's face was set hard. His lips barely moved when he answered. "Around sixty or seventy miles, I guess."

"Down this road?"

"Yeah."

"How far back to the highway?"

Bill started to answer, but Charlie broke in ahead of him. "Reckon that it's about forty miles, give and take a little."

Tony stepped away from the door of the car. "You——pretty boy. Come over here and get the brat out of the back seat."

Bill's jaw set, then moved almost as rapidly as his lips. What words came out were not printable. The tirade was cut off by the flat crack of the short-barrelled .38 pistol. A slug plucked at the tall man's arm, laying

across the bicep like a chunk of ice.

Bill stared down at the red line across the muscle.

"Don't be no hero and make me come any closer. Now get the kid out of the back. Put her on her feet!"

Bill's eyes seemed to set into a hard jade. He moved to the car and lifted the youngster from the tilting seat. Tears spilled down her frightened face, cutting fresh white tracks in the grey dust.

"It's all right, honey," he said softly. He ripped the tape binders from her ankles and from the pinioned wrists on which she had lain. The flesh under the tapes was purple and inflamed. As blood forced itself into her hands and feet she rolled her eyes wildly, then slumped against him. He caught her awkwardly with his left hand, but couldn't hold her. She slid down his body, her knees grinding into the hot desert sand.

Charlie walked forward slowly. He looked at the marks on her wrists. Then his hand went to the tape at her mouth. He took it firmly and peeled it away. Pain came into her eyes, but she didn't cry out. The old man lifted her gently and carried her towards the truck, mindless of the gun which tracked him. In the shade of the great tanker he lowered her gently to the ground, then went for the two water bags——one full, the second nearly empty.

Clumsily the old man held the water bag to the child's lips. The water splashed over her face and she drank greedily.

The fat man came up and seized the other bag, tilting it and sucking out the small amount of water it contained. It ran empty and he threw it aside, then bent and seized the nearly full bag away from the girl's face.

Charlie looked up at the small man with the gun. "How long since you gave this kid water?" His voice was low, cold.

"She had a drink before we left Phoenix—she don't need none."

"You simple, stupid louse! In another fifteen minutes she'd have been dead of thirst—dried out from the heat. Give me back that water bag!" It was not an order for questioning, and it was not questioned. The little man hesitated only a moment, then took the water bag out of Larry's hands and handed it back to Charlie.

The old man let water trickle into the girl's mouth. Her hands came up, grasping for the wet canvas. He lifted the bag away. "That's enough for now," he said. "We don't want you to be sick."

Charlie handed the bag to the

little man. "You better have some, too," he said. "You'll be seein' things in a minute, yourself."

"Cover 'em, Larry," Tony said. When another gun was in view, he grasped the water bag and drank in great gulps.

Charlie remained beside the girl. He held her hand and spoke to her gently, trying to calm the quiet terror in her eyes. Finally he looked up at the small man. "You kidnapped her, huh?"

The gun came back to bear on him. "You talk too much, old man."

"Kidnapped her, and was tryin' to get to the border with her." The contempt in his voice was thick and spiny. "A kid not over nine years old. Nine years old and you tie her up so she can't hit you."

"Shut up, old man!"

"And so stupid that you didn't know a person can die in this heat."

The fat man spoke up. "What difference would it make——she wasn't gonna live anyhow."

"Shut up, Larry."

Charlie picked it up. "You had a lot to be afraid of, didn't you? A nine year old kid can talk, and maybe tell what you look like. So you'd leave her out here in the desert with a bullet in her head."

Tony's face lighted a little with a new idea. "You say that kid would have been dead quick if she didn't get that water?"

"Anybody would."

"We only left Phoenix about four hours ago. You mean to say that this heat can kill you that fast?"

"Faster than that, out here," Bill said. He reached for the water bag the little man was holding. The gun came down across his hand.

"Not for you, lover-boy. That water bag's got to last us until the Mexican border. You three have had too much of it now." He looked at the fat man. "Can you drive this heap?"

"Sure I can."

"Then get the stuff out of the car," Tony snapped. "We just got us a new set of wheels and a cargo to sell when we get across." He looked back at Charlie. "Where does this road hit the border, dad?"

"It goes straight down, bends just a little and hits about twenty miles east of Sonoita."

"About seventy miles, you said?"

"Somethin' like that."

"What's the nearest town from here?"

"Ak Chin."

"Action? That's a town?"

"Indian village, with just a couple of traders or so." Charlie looked at the man. "So you're gonna kill us and take our rig across the border. You must be

hard up to hi-jack this load—— my old truck ain't worth much and . . ."

Bill broke in. "They ain't interested in the truck, Charlie. They just want a way out of here. I suppose they got the ransom money already, right?"

"That's right, sonny. We took fifty big bills on this deal, and that lousy oil truck doesn't mean nothin' but a way out of here. Pop, tell me some more about the road between here and the border."

"Ain't nothin' on it but desert and a few hills. It gets a little hotter, down in the basin."

"What about that town?"

"You'll miss it by thirty miles or so. It's off to the right. There just ain't nothin' within thirty miles of this road exceptin' desert." The old man's face lifted, looking up at the man who stood over him, holding the water bag. "I reckon we'd be obliged if you'd shoot us——not leave us to die from the heat."

Bill's eyes went wide, and his big body braced as if to make a last desperate try. Even the little girl tried to lift herself up against Charlie's hands. Tony was rather enjoying himself. He lounged back against the tank.

"How far do you think you could make it in this heat, pop?" the small man said. "The three of you——could you walk out?"

"A man could last maybe four or five miles without water—she couldn't. Without water, we'd be buzzard bait in less than two hours."

The fat man was back, throwing two suitcases into the truck and holding on to a briefcase which Charlie knew would hold the fifty thousand ransom dollars. He looked critically at the truck. "She's an old wreck, Tony ——but she'll do. The load of oil will pay for a new car, too."

Bill started to say something, but Charlie flashed a look which stopped him.

"You were gonna say something, pretty boy?"

"I hope you choke, you greasy little punk. I'd like to see you without that gun, just for about two minutes——just to see how tough you'd really be."

"Cover the hero, Larry," Tony snapped. He waited until the second gun was bearing on the group, then stepped towards Bill. "You'd want to hit me? Go ahead——you swing and Larry'll put a bullet in your guts." His long-fingered, soft hand whipped out and slapped Bill across the face. Bill's muscles tensed. "Go ahead," Tony taunted him. "Die the hard way."

Bill held his body in check with an effort that made him shake with tension. The little man came closer, looking up at him, hoping that he would move.

Bill didn't move his body. He

spat. The little man stepped back, livid with rage, his hand diving for the gun in his belt.

"Thank God," Charlie said. "He's gonna shoot us!"

That got through to Tony, even in his rage. "No," he said slowly. "That's too quick." He thought it through. "And it leaves bodies with holes in 'em . . . just like signposts."

Charlie's face was grave. "So you're gonna leave us out here to die."

"Let's just say I'm gonna let you take a hike. Sorry the one water bag is empty." He kicked the empty bag aside. "But Larry and me got the other one, and you can think about us havin' a drink whenever you get a minute or two. Now, all three of you, just back way off the road there, ahead of the truck where we can see you. We want time to get moving without having to worry about you three hitch-hikin'."

Charlie came to his feet, helping the girl. Slowly the three of them retreated towards the wrecked car. The fat hoodlum had clambered into the truck. The old engine wheezed, coughed, then roared into life. Tony swung up on to the scaling step.

Then the old truck was gone. The three of them stood, watching it disappear in a white dust plume.

"Well," Charlie said slowly, "that's that."

"So we didn't die with a bullet in the belly. Would you rather die from the heat?" Bill's voice was harsh, rasping.

"I don't want to die." The girl said it quietly, looking up at Charlie. It was the first thing she had said. "I don't have to die, do I?"

"Not for quite a spell, I reckon. We're just gonna sit in the shade for a couple hours, then when the sun goes down we'll walk back to the highway and flag a car."

"And what do we do for water?" Bill asked.

"It ain't gonna taste good unless you're plenty thirsty, but if you get that empty water bag, I reckon we can get about four gallons out of the radiator of this car. We'll use the car for shade, too. Then when the sun goes down, we'll light up a fire to attract attention, then start walkin' out."

"Fire?"

"There oughta be quite a slew of gas in the tank—it'll make plenty of light. But even if nobody sees it, we oughta be able to walk to the highway in five or six hours—even goin' slow."

It was nearly two o'clock the next afternoon when the state trooper pulled the black and

white car up behind the old tanker. He kept some fifty yards distant from the vehicle, opened his door cautiously and stepped out. Charlie unlimbered his lank frame and slid from the right hand door.

"I don't reckon you'll need that gun, Ted," he said, nodding at the weapon in the trooper's hand.

"You don't think there's a chance they're still alive——that they found out?"

Charlie looked into the sun-whitened sky. Some five miles ahead, on the road to Sonoita, there were buzzards wheeling low in the sky. "It doesn't look like it, does it?"

The husky trooper went towards the truck, still cautiously approaching, his body in a half-crouch. Then he straightened and jerked open the door on the driver's side. The body of the fat man rolled out, bouncing awkwardly down the high step and on to the narrow shoulder of the road, face up. Where there had been an eye there was now only a purple mass.

"Short range," the trooper said. "He got it the quick way."

"Had it out over who'd get the water bag, I reckon." Charlie stepped into the cab and tried the starter. Only a whir and a chunking sound. "She's solid," he said slowly.

"I guess that puts you out of business, doesn't it, Charlie?"

The old man pulled a hand across his chin. "Would have, except for the fact that I took on a partner, walking out of here yesterday."

The trooper's face was incredulous. "You mean Bill?" he asked. "Him that's been screamin' about how useless the desert is?"

"He's gone into Prescott to see about gettin' us another truck. Maybe we can even swing a new engine for this." There was pride in the old man's eyes. He looked down the road towards the border. "That youngster took a lot of convincin'."

The trooper let his freckles split into a smile. "I'll radio in for a tow when I call out the ambulance." He looked back at the body on the ground. "Won't do them much good, now." He looked up at the man behind the wheel of the ruined truck. "How far do you reckon the other greenhorn made?"

"Five . . . maybe six miles. It'd depend on how much water was still in the bag when the truck burned out."

He dropped off the high step on to the ground. "We might as well get in the shade, Ted." He led the trooper back along the

side of the massive tank, then sat down in the dust.

The khaki-clad officer walked the short distance to the radio car, made his transmission, then returned. He was carrying a canvas water bag. He stood at the rear of the truck, beside the old man, then turned the slip-wrench on the valve. A gush of water flooded out, filling the canvas bag in a torrent.

"Six thousand gallons right behind them, and they kill each other over a couple of quarts." He reset the wrench and closed the valve. The torrent of water slowed and stopped.

"I'm gonna have this rig repainted," the old man said slowly. "In blue and white—'Davis and Son, Water Contractors.'"

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another adventure of stately homes

by Arthur Porges

THERE WERE MANY cases solved by my friend Stately Homes (of England), for which he never received an official credit. In fact, a number of well-known detectives, some with Scotland Yard, others private investigators, battened on his genius.

You will recall how he helped Sir Henry Merrivale identify the killer of Miss Marple.* Unfortunately, Captain Ahab, the murderer, escaped capture, and apparently died at sea when his ship, the *Pequod,* was sunk by a whale. At least, that was the story told by the only survivor, a windy, rhetorical fellow — Yankee, naturally — some months later. Homes always maintained it was nothing but a typical sailor's yarn, and that beyond doubt the ruthless captain was safe in America.

Among our frequent visitors after the Marple case, I remember particularly a little Belgian, with an egg-shaped head and rather absurd moustaches, who came regularly for help with his investigations. He was far too muddled a thinker to succeed in our exacting profession, but always declared after Homes

As we go to press, we have still been unable to obtain any reliable information on the early years of Stately Homes (of England). It has been suggested — note the similarity of initials — that Mr. Homes is a relative (perhaps even a son–) of the greatest detective we've ever known, but Mr. Homes has declined to comment on "this absurd rumour"...

*See *An Adventure of Stately Homes*, EQMM, February 1957.

had resolved the puzzle that my friend's explanations had so strengthened his little grey cells that he was now ready for anything, and would never require assistance again. Oddly enough, he seemed to have a great many wealthy clients begging for his services, but seldom offered to share his large fees with Homes.

When I commented somewhat bitterly about this, my friend just laughed.

"My dear Sun Wat," he said. "Intellectual activity is my very life blood. Must a man expect pay for breathing?"

That same day he was imposed upon again by a tall, handsome Scotland Yard official named West, who burst in upon us with his wife and two children clinging to the man like parasitic plants to an oak.

Nor did my friend refuse to help even colonials and Americans with their rough ways. I recall a man from Chicago, or maybe Oregon — one of the Western Territories, anyhow — named Mallet — no, Hammer — who followed a female criminal to London. He lost her in the Seven Dials area, and came to Homes for assistance. My friend disguised himself as a dwarfish Japanese fisherman, and eventually found the woman hiding in a fish-and-chips stall. I shall never forget his horror when the American de*tective, instead of requesting* extradition, calmly shot the girl through the duodenum with a dum-dum bullet.

"I always act as my own judge and jury," he told Homes. "It's the only way to ensure a fair trial with no political meddling. It's the American Way," he added proudly. "I understand you English often wait as long as three weeks after a mur-der before hanging the criminal."

He must have squirmed under my friend's contempt, however, for later he became a Trappist Monk.

But I mustn't digress too far. There is to be found, in the old tin box of hitherto unreported cases, a remarkable affair hauntingly similar to the Marple murder, and like it, a locked room problem of the most baffling sort.

And once again, as a established expert in these puzzling matters, Sir Henry Merrivale was involved — and soon beyound his depth, as before.

I was quite ill at the time, the result of an old wound — a Jezail bullet somewhere between my neck and ankle; I never could remember the exact spot.

To all requests for his aid, Stately Homes merely said: "I'm sorry, gentlemen. I'm sitting up with my Sikh friend, and cannot undertake any investigations

at this time." My notes show that he turned away such famous detectives as Gideon and Miller, of Scotland Yard, and private operators named Fortune, Campion, Priestley, and Spade.

It was quite impossible, however, to refuse a man like Merrivale, with his connections at No. 10 Downing Street. He came in, as usual, like a newly beached and indignant sea-monster, roaring and bristling, followed timidly by our Swedish landlady, Mrs. Hutsut.

"Ho!" he boomed at the sight of Homes working with some flasks of chemicals. "Makin' stinks again, hey!" Leering horribly, he pulled my friend from the lab bench, and practically forced him into a chair.

"Burn it all!" he moaned. "Why do these things always happen to me? Another locked room case, and more impossible than the other fifteen. I'm the Old Man," he added with pride, "but there's gotta be a limit. Every time they come to me."

"And then you call on Homes," I said rather maliciously from my bed.

The back of his neck purpled ominously.

"More of those damned Sikh jokes of yours!" he roared. "Looky, Sun——"

"Perhaps if you gave us the facts," Homes broke in soothingly.

"Facts? What good are they? Can't make a bit of sense out of 'em. What I need are theories."

"You know my methods," Homes persisted. "Facts, first, Sir Henry, if you don't mind."

"Oh, very well." He glowered at us, contorting his huge face horribly. "Lord love a duck! It couldn't be worse. Do you know who's been scragged?"

My friend shook his head.

"I've been too concerned with Sun Wat here to go through the papers very carefully."

"Lumme — you won't find this item in the *Times;* it's been hushed up. No wonder. Inspector French, our own man, has been murdered."

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "Joseph French — one of the best."

"Poor French," Homes echoed, rising from his chair in agitation. "We must avenge him. The police should be immune from criminal violence, or the law is struck to the heart. Not," he added thoughtfully, "that French was literally first rate. Best of the plodders, no doubt. A few steps ahead of that fuzzy-minded Belgian, but——"

"Never mind the ratings," Merrivale howled. "Besides, be fair, Homes. Nobody could whip up a complicated timetable like poor French. Page after page of

the stuff, lumme. B left train at 9:04, walked ten and a half minutes on wet gravel, twelve and two-thirds on sand; then drove forty-nine miles at a speed of fifty-four point six kilometres per hour — you know the drill."

"You haven't told me how it happened," my friend said.

"If I knew that, I wouldn't be here," H.M. bellowed a succession of terrifying scowls crossing his vast purple face. "It's just like that Marple case, and the one before that, and all the bloomin' others. Only worse, burn me! They found French in a locked room, with barred windows yet. Somebody hit him on the cokernut from behind. There was a half-completed timetable on the floor by his body."

"Suicide, perhaps?" Homes suggested. "Maybe for once he couldn't get his calculations to check out to five decimal places, and the poor fellow, in despair, killed himself."

"Suicide!" Sir Henry howled. "With a bash on the head from behind? I never get anything like a simple suicide anyhow," he groaned, mauve streaks flickering over his two square feet of malignant features.

"How far apart are those bars you mentioned?"

"Not more than six inches. And rusted tight in place. And the door was really immovable. Heavy oak, with metal fittings. It wasn't actually locked, d'ye mind; just warped and corroded into the frame. The room is a kind of dungeon, and hasn't been opened for sixty years."

"Let me understand you," Homes said, his keen face aglow with animation. "Inspector French's body was found inside a sort of prison cell with barred windows and a hopelessly jammed door."

"That's right," Sir Henry said gloomily.

"With a time-table nearby."

"Yes. Typical French job. About eight pages of notes."

"And what did they reveal?"

"Looky, son. If they were any use, I wouldn't be here at all. French had just been timing all the suspects, as usual. About a dozen of 'em. French always suspected everybody down to parlour cat."

"What crime was he actually investigating?"

"The fifty thousand pound robbery of Sir Charles Sutherland's firm.

"Which deals in——?"

"He's a food processor. He smokes, dries, cans, and otherwise ruins fresh comestibles," Merrivale snarled.

Homes was pacing now, his face oddly flushed. I was afraid that an attack of his hereditary disease, Gas on the Genes, was imminent, and eyed the gaso-

gene full of medicine uneasily.

"In short, then, French was trying to recover stolen money to the amount of fifty thousand pounds sterling."

"And the criminal, naturally. The man who slugged Sir Charles Sutherland from behind while he was standing by the open safe."

"It's all very confusing," my friend said. "How did French get into that room in the first place, and why?"

"Lord love a duck!" HM squalled, his face one purple expanse of irritation. "That's the problem."

"Maybe he was after clues," I suggested, but they ignored me.

"I can't work without data," Homes muttered. "It won't do to leave, either. And Sun Wat is sick—"

"Everybody knows he's Sikh," Merrivale said. "Don't confuse the issue; it's bad enough to begin with. Burn it all, one more locked room and I'm off for Africa, where people live in grass huts. Let 'em find a locked room there — fat chance!"

"I think the answer can be found," my friend said, his hawkface glowing. "In all London only one man can resolve this puzzle without going to the scene, by his sheer power of deduction. I mean my older brother, Tract."

"Tract Homes," I exclaimed, sitting up in bed. "But you always said he never leaves his club."

"Not never; just rarely; and only for me." He stepped to the door, and called down to Mrs. Hutsut, who soon came up. Homes hastily scribbled a note, handed it to her, and said, "Have the page boy take that to Mr. Tract Homes at the Real Estate Club. You'll find him at the mathematical centre of the room, four yards from the fire, wearing a grey smoking-jacket." When she had left, he rubbed his acid-stained hands together almost gloatingly. "Now you'll see a really powerful intellect at work, gentlemen. Never fear, Sir Henry; my brother will soon resolve this problem."

"Look," Merrivale objected. "Nobody can figure this thing out with his rump in a chair."

"Nobody but Tract Homes," my friend replied calmly, and returned to his chemicals. In the next hour, while waiting for his brother, he refused to help callers named Vance, Trent, Dupin, a Lord Wimsey, and a professor, obviously quite unbalanced, who insisted on being addressed as "The Thinking Machine."

But finally there were slow, reluctant steps on the stairs, and a bulky man came in, panting. He was pouting.

"I hope you have a good reason for disturbing me, Stately," he said in a frosty voice, examining Sir Henry's face with something like incredulity.

"The best," Homes assured him. "A very baffling crime for which I am unable to acquire data, since Sun Wat here is sick, and needs my attention."

"I don't have to be told he's Sikh," Tract said. "My eyesight is normal, and the heavy black beard evidence enough. I should think it would take all your power of deduction," he added sourly, "to find the man's mouth in that tangle when medication is required."

"One more Sikh joke," Merrivale squalled, "and my heaven, I'll murder—"

"No distractions, please," the elder Homes interrupted. "Just what is this problem that causes me to be dragged from a good fire to these wretched quarters?"

"Nothing less than the callous slaying of an honest and competent police - officer," Homes said gravely. "I could solve the mystery quite easily, of course, but not without gathering a few more facts. You are never hampered by such a lack of concrete information. But let me tell you what is known." In terse, lucid phrases, he described the finding of French's body, stressing the jammed door and solidly fastened bars of iron.

When he had finished this masterful summary Tract sat motionless for at least ten minutes, oblivious to Merrivale's lowering stare. Then he said: "Sutherland. I know that name. He was blackballed for admission to my club. Much too hairy at the heel. First made his fortune by building a lot of overpriced cottages on the cheap. Like that cousin of ours, the snob who hyphenated the family name. You remember him — Gerald, I believe."

"Of course," Homes said. "Jerry, Jerry Bilt-Homes. Quite a rascal."

"Looky, you two," Merrivale objected. "Never mind the sisters, cousins, and aunts. Who scragged French, and more to the point, burn it all, how did they get in and out? For that matter, howinhell did French get in?"

"Come, gentlemen," Tract reproved them. "Surely the matter is obvious. Was French a big man?"

"Not very," Homes replied. About five feet eight, and weighing eleven stone."

"I inferred as much," Tract said calmly. "And you don't know Sutherland's specialty, either, I suppose."

"No."

"He manufactures dried fruit. Nobody in the business has been

able to dehydrate large prunes so efficiently. And beef, too. Now let me remind you that the human body is mostly water. Surely it's clear what happened. Sutherland killed French outside that dungeon, took the body secretly to his big factory at night, and there reduced his remains to a dry, shrunken mass of, say, twenty pounds at most. He thrust this narrow, bony bundle through the bars, and then by means of a hose squirted water over it until the cadaver expanded to its normal bulk. Really, the problem could hardly be more trivial."

"But why?" Merrivale howled. "French was working for Sutherland."

Tract shook his head in disgust.

"A moment's thought will make it plain, Sir Henry, that Sutherland must have faked the whole crime and pocketed the money. French was closing in, armed with one of those incredible time-tables of his."

"And leaving it by the body was merely a gesture of defiance of the police," Stately Homes cried.

"More or less. Sutherland knew that nobody else could possibly get any sense out of a French time-table. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'm off to the club."

When he was gone, HM glowered at us, and rumbled, "He's got the right idea, lumme. The best place is inside a locked room. I'm gonna try it myself." Whereupon he stalked out.

Stately Homes gave a slight groan, and reached for the gasogene. A hellish disease, that Gas on the Genes. Too bad Mendel discovered it.

ANGEL STREET

The Shearer Players, of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, an interesting little theatre group, presented Patrick Hamilton's classic "Victorian Melodrama", ANGEL STREET, in New York, this Spring. Elizabeth White, the director of the group whose performances I hope some of you will see this summer, appeared as the distraught Mrs. Manningham who is being driven insane by her somewhat less than charming husband.

To refer to this as a "Victorian Melodrama" is of course unwise. In those days, short of killing her, this *was* admittedly one way in which the husband could gain unquestioned possession of his wife's estate—with the sympathetic assistance of the local law. But let us face it. This is still being done—with jet age refinements, of course—and not only in some of the neo-Freudian mystery novels. . . .

H.S.S.

what's new in crime

by Stefan Santesson

A columnist in the London *Sunday Telegraph* reported some time ago one reason why the Secret Service had not used more than Forty Thousand Pounds of the previous year's grant. The biggest item in the savings, estimated at roughly Twenty Thousand Pounds, had come about as a result of the decision to run joint Anglo-Soviet operations, charged to a split M.I.6/K.G.B. expense account, in posts like Katmandu and Pnom Penh where both countries, and understandably so, share a common interest in China's activities. This rather interesting pilot scheme, somewhat of the sort forecast in the early Palfrey novels, is apparently to be extended, "at least until one of the double-agents double-crosses".

The trouble with most of the novels which have to do with these matters is that few if any (with the obvious exception of William Haggard's novels) reflect these, if I may use the expression, professional realities. Instead we are fed clichés, and pseudo-Freudian explanations of the frustrations and the dreams of these field operatives, to the degree that the ordinary reader will find it difficult to believe

Another report on recent novels in which SMM readers may be interested. The writer, editor of this magazine since 1956, edited the Unicorn Mystery Book Club during 1945-'52. He was awarded the Critic's Edgar at the April 1964 Awards Dinner of the Mystery Writers of America.

that the Rudolf Abels and the Gordon Lonsdales of this world are in fact very real people, subject to pressures and impulses the understanding of which can be essential to our security.

The never-never land of this modern espionage novel can therefore be a wonderful thing to behold. Obviously aimed at the American market, as in the case of THE SPY WHO CAME OUT FROM THE COLD, and as often inadequately researched, they are however often delightful reading. But—with rare exceptions—they should not be taken seriously as mirrors of these rather confused times.

Far from it . . .

And this, I am afraid, includes John Le Carré's best-selling THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD (Coward McCann, $4.50), which Mr. Graham Greene, so we are told, called, "The best spy story I have ever read."

There is no denying that it is an interesting adventure story, written with one eye on the films, but that indefinable quality which was found in the author's earlier novels has yielded place, in an obvious concession to the overseas market, to the psycho-analytic mishmash that is supposed to mark the difference between a mainstream novel, and an "escape novel".

I have now read this novel twice, and am still concerned at this trend within the genre which can only be regarded as a departure from reality. The basic premise of the novel has validity—that a man such as Leamas would be considered expendable in the *realpolitik* chess game of higher echelon Intelligence decisions. This is a calculated ploy, and in the early stage of Leamas' Trojan Horse penetration of the East German security machinery this possibility is recognized, even by the ostensible objective of the move.

But there reality ends and Freud begins, Freud against a *Götterdammerung* background which is not credible if one considers the presumed calibre of the opposition at this level. The earlier interrogation of the defector Leamas is professional, but later on we are asked to accept as credible a series of neurotic papier maché characterizations who bear no resemblance to what little we know of such personalities in the Ullbricht regime. As a result, Elizabeth Gold, both in her life and in her last moments, is perhaps the most credible—and the most moving—personality in this latter-day Gothic tragedy.

Simon Harvester's THE FLYING HORSE (Walker, $3.50), the story of Heron Murmur's dangerous and already betrayed

mission into North Korea, should be of particular interest to students of East Asiatic affairs. Obviously carefully and even painstakingly researched (in contrast to Harvester's earlier novels where he was writing about a part of the world with which he is reportedly more familiar), the author has succeeded in getting across the bleak and hopeless quality of life in North Korea with an effectiveness other writers, Le Carré included, might well emulate. This is not a pleasant story but THE FLYING HORSE comes close, in this writer's opinion, to being one of the most important novels in the field to be published this year. Strongly recommended.

An American military transport plane has crashed in Central Turkey and it is essential that the aircraft be reached, and its cargo of secret experimental weapons be destroyed—before either the Turks—or the Russians—reach the wreck. John Castle's THE SEVENTH FURY (Walker, $3.50), deals with this search and with the role played in the subsequent events both by the scientists drafted for the hurriedly arranged flight to Turkey, and by the Turkish students who had, by a coincidence, been in hiding in the same deserted part of Anatolia where the crash took place.

All this was happening at a period in Turkish affairs, the importance to us of which cannot be exaggerated. The regime of Adnan Menderes, against which those students had been demonstrating, was being toppled by General Cemal Gürsel's National Unity Committee while the Anglo-American team was nearing the crashed Freightmaster. In the midst of Revolution, the machinery of Law had to swing into action in an effort to forestall a worse disaster than the crash. Without ever getting down to brass tacks (which might after all have been politically indelicate . . .), the novel manages to convey something of the conditions, the somewhat less than democratic conditions to put it mildly, under which the peoples of Turkey had been living for several years. But more about all this some other time. . . . The novel, despite its hero, interested me because of its reference to these events.

Victor Canning's THE LIMBO LINE (William Sloane, $3.95), deals with the forced return of Iron Curtain refugees to their homelands, to the concern of both Interpol and the police in France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. A big organization is obviously involved, and Richard Manston is drafted from retirement to watch over Irina

Tovskaya, the dancer who it is known is next on the kidnap list, and to stay with her until she is delivered to whoever is then responsible for her trans-shipment to Russia. This, in substance, is what precedes a series of happenings told in Mr. Canning's familiar deft style. Interesting.

By way of contrast there is Patrick O'Malley's THE AFFAIR OF CHIEF STRONGHEART (Mill-Morrow, $3.50), which we are told is to be the last adventure of Harrigan and Hoeffler, those (according to the publishers, I hasten to add!) "most amazing, urbane and witty counter-espionage agents". There are some rather formidable people, not to mention a formidable cigar-store Indian, involved in this latest zany adventure of these two irrepressibles. Miss Pribbernow, the authoress of the definitive article on trilium, published (so we are assured) in the *North American Trilium Breeding Gazette*, who has succeeded in growing *stylosum* in North Dakota (near the ICBM site) is perhaps the most attractive assistant the two have enlisted. It is to be hoped that they will not leave for Switzerland and retirement as early as they hope, and as for Stashia Pribbernow—well, read THE AFFAIR OF CHIEF STRONGHEART.

And chuckle.

It's a good feeling.

John Blackburn's PACKED FOR MURDER (Mill-Morrow, $3.50) has to do with a few realities of life—without underlining them.

Tania Vitgeff had not, it turned out, disappeared on a trainride to Edinburgh six months earlier. She had been knocked out and stuffed into a trunk in her own house and, in her last moments, the dying woman had scratched a message inside the trunk which was to give General Kirk of British Intelligence several extremely uncomfortable hours. The possibility that her message could be true forced upon Kirk collaboration with the one man, the director of the League of White Russians, who might forestall the inevitable.

Desmond Cory's SHOCKWAVE (Walker, $3.50), like his earlier UNDERTOW (Walker, $3.50), deals with the adventures of Johnny Fedora of British Intelligence, a rather deadly gentleman who may remind some of James Bond. Fedora, who in both novels frustrates the plans of the Soviet agent Feramontov (who in SHOCKWAVE aims a deathblow at the Franco regime), has a way with the ladies and is, of course, likewise satisfactorily indestructible.

the dead gods live!

by J. Fortner

IT IS COMMON ENOUGH today to dismiss all the ancient legends of curses, hexes and bewitchments as "unscientific, and without foundation in fact." Recent years have seen Voodoo rise as a powerful adversary of Roman Catholicism in Haiti. Interest in Mysticism and the occult seems to be growing faster than interest in the space age. Many people are discovering that there are truths more ancient than those they knew as children.

One incontrovertible testimony of the power of the "dead" gods of ancient times to influence events in the world of today comes from the little Peruvian town of Nazca.

On the gravelled surfaces of an extensive plain surrounding the town on all sides, an ancient people engraved the amulets of their religious belief. Cyclopean figures, measuring from 150 to 500 feet in length, record important sacrifices made to the all-powerful gods who controlled the flow of water from the Andes mountains to the north. Without that water they could not live, and the compassion of the gods was dearly bought. During the first ceremonies of each year, animals were used, and their entrails scattered on the

This is not a mystery story. This is however the story of a number of deaths — and of one possible explanation of these deaths . . . The author, who lives in Peru, is particularly familiar with the part of the country described in this story of what happens—what happens—to those who deny the past . . .

ground as an omen for the coming season. Later, the entrails were examined while the animal still lived, and—if this proved to be insufficient—human sacrifices might follow, first of slaves and then one of their own number, should the gods refuse to accept a lesser price for their bounty.

During the long clear nights of the Peruvian winter, the Nazcan hierophants officiated at torchlight dances, in the hope that their gods would send enough water in the spring. They prayed for the fertility of both the land and the people. Their prayers took the form of solemn processions towards the distant horizons where the stars of the Great Dipper made their first appearance at the end of the winter. Events of special importance were commemorated by the construction of triangles, spirals and other geometric forms on the surface of this tableland, dedicated to the Gods.

Like most agricultural peoples, the Nazcans were intensely devoted to their gods, and their simple faith brought them rich blessings. At one time, their power became so great that they subdued even the mightly Incas, and forced them to construct animal figures and geometric forms to the greater glory of the Nazca gods. This passion reached its peak shortly before the final decline of the Nazca culture, in the years shortly before William the Conqueror emerged as the victor at Hastings.

A total of 320 square miles of the Peruvian coastal plain is covered with their religious and astronomical symbols. These symbols are almost as varied and complex as those of the Mayas of Mexico, to whom the study of the stars was also a religious obligation. Needless to say, they have yet to be deciphered.

Here, then, is one of the great archaeological heritages of the western hemisphere, lying open to the ravages of the winds and occasional flash floods, that plague the area. The Nazca drawings were made by the simple expedient of removing the uppermost layer of gravel, so that the lower layer, which is a different color, can show through. Every time a human being walks over one of these designs, he displaces a few pebbles; animals, and especially the burros that are favored in the region, displace many more.

For over a thousand years, these drawings have survived the worst that unmechanized man and the forces of nature could do to them. At the beginning of this century, the tablelands were essentially as the Nazcans left them. The sticks

used to assist the surveyors, and the natural pillars of rock carried many miles from the mountains to mark important intersections were still in place. The local people knew from the experience of centuries that supernatural forces were at work to protect the unique shrine erected by their ancestors. It was worth a man's life, they said, to desecrate one of the holy places; his wife would bear no children if he carried away so much as a fragment of cloth or a bit of pottery found within the precincts of the Nazca gods.

Then, all at once, matters changed, with a vengeance. Trucks and tractors began to find their way onto the big estates near Nazca. The estate owners, not satisfied with the liberal grants of the Spanish kings, wanted more and more of the lands that used to belong to the Indians. An American botanist named Tangüis had discovered a new species of long-fibre staple cotton. The value of land on the Peruvian coast doubled, then tripled. Today an acre of land suitable for Tangüis cotton is worth ten times as much as a comparable piece of land in the United States.

After cotton, came sugar as the second biggest money crop. Land, more land, is what the big planters wanted! The Indians, it was discovered, had no rights. They were illiterate. Who said they were citizens, in the first place? The cultivated areas moved closer and closer to the tablelands of Nazca. The ancient gods redoubled their vigilance. It was destined that no man would live to enjoy profits earned from crops raised on *their* lands.

José de la Barra was one of the most important farmers in the province of Nazca. By the time of his death in 1935, he had amassed a great fortune in foreign currencies, and owned five large ranches besides. His relationship with his workers, while not by any means as idyllic as the old men of the town would have you believe, still conformed to the traditional Spanish code of mutual respect and essential decency.

When don José passed on, his four sons took over the administration of the family estates.

Again, according to the ethics of his class, he left the property only to his legitimate sons, twin brothers called Julio and Gustavo, respectively. The other two sons were born without benefit of wedlock, but were amply recompensed for their disinheritance in terms of land by substantial gifts of money given them by Julio and Gustavo, who didn't

want any unpleasantries at the reading of the will.

The de la Barra brothers were a tightly knit clan, members of an élite, and privileged from birth. They didn't see any reason to continue their father's lenient policies towards the Indian laborers, and they saved almost fifty per cent of their labor costs by cancelling the unwritten fringe benefits which have been the right of Peruvian workmen since the times of the Incas. No longer did the estate pay for midwives, and send special baskets of fruit for the new mother. No longer did the patrón treat his laborers to lavish fiestas, and the Indian's burro could no longer graze at liberty on the lands belonging to the estate.

With the advent of the war, the price of cotton sky-rocketed. It was urgently needed for defense needs in both the U. S. and Britain. Peru was called on to double production. The de la Barras became richer than they had ever dreamed. But they paid their Indians no more on that account. The borders of the estate crept closer and again closer to the sacred tableland. Every square foot was given over the production of cotton. No longer did the estate grow food for the workers; they could buy what they wanted at the market, they were told. There were no fat Indians in Nazca during those years.

In search of new lands to irrigate, the de la Barras sent their trucks back and forth across the pampa. That was the beginning of the damage they were to wreak on the ancient sanctuary of the Nazca gods. The wheels of a truck or an automobile can do more damage to the ground drawings in a single hour than a man or a burro in a month. The rubber tires eat deep into the subsurface of the gravel. They dislocate the pebbles on the borders of the designs. They were the natural enemies of the Nazca temple.

When their own efforts failed, the brothers called in a Russian engineer, who had somehow found his way to Nazca during the war. "We are badly in need of more land for the production of cotton" they told him. "You must find it." And then almost as an afterthought, Julio the "eldest" of the twins asked the engineer to make a map showing the whereabouts of the ancient animal drawings. "You will be well rewarded for your work," he said. "We like to show our visitors the sights of the town. If you can't find a suitable place to grow cotton at least your trip will not have been for nothing."

The engineer started out at dawn the following day, and began to drive around Nazca fol-

lowing, as nearly as he could, a chart he had drawn up while working with an American geologist the year before. Every time, he completed a circuit, he drove one mile further from the center of Nazca and started again. His route, therefore, resembled a spiral, starting at the middle and working its way out. When he had gone very far from the populated areas, he found that he was lost. He had his maps, of course, but, as he did not know where he was, they were of little use to him. When he tried to get his bearings, first with a compass and then with the new theodolite the de la Barras had given him, he was shocked to find that neither instrument functioned properly. He hadn't thought to bring his sextant, because a man with a theodolite doesn't need a sextant. The theodolite, under ordinary circumstances, is far more accurate and easier to use. He got back in the car, and began to drive down a narrow cleft in the hillside. He found that he was frightened for no reason at all. The sun was setting, and he had not thought to bring more food than was necessary for lunch and perhaps a snack in mid-afternoon. The people on the estate would surely wonder if he didn't show up soon after dark. It would certainly never occur to them that he, an engineer who earned his living as a geologist's guide, had lost his way within thirty miles of Nazca.

His anger distracted him from his driving, and he couldn't really see what lay ahead of him on the rocky path.

The little jeep pitched forward, and then up. A grinding wrenching of metal told him that something had collided with his front axle. He climbed cautiously over the side of the car, lest it roll over onto him as a result of this movement. His powerful oil lantern (which every wise driver carries in the event it is necessary to stop on the highway during the night) told the story at one glance: one of the few remaining pillars of the ancient star-temple had been erected beside a large pile of stones, somewhat in the shape of an igloo or Rhodesian roundhouse. The jeep had come downhill in the twilight, when even powerful headlamps are of little help to the motorist, climbed the mound of little stones, and impaled itself squarely on top of the stone pillar. Fortunately, the pillar was not imbedded very deeply in the soil, and the inertia of the moving vehicle was enough to uproot it. Otherwise, the engineer's first encounter with the Nazca gods might have been his last.

The engineer had, of course, sustained incidents of this kind

in his career before, and he could now see lights moving in the distance. That would be the Pan American Highway. It had not been visible during the day, because the bright sunlight of late afternoon obscured his vision while looking west. Now, however, three hours walk brought him safely to the highway, and a few minutes more secured him a place on top of a truck hauling furniture to the south. He arrived at the estate not long after he was scheduled to do so, looking not much the worse for wear.

A voice startled him as he neared the pump where he wanted to remove some of the sand from his eyes before going in to dinner. "When you have taken your car off the rock, you must leave Nazca." The Russian stared into the darkness and saw a man step out from behind the pump. It was Santa-Cruz Pachacuti,——a young Indian who had studied medicine in the capital, and returned to his people as an herbalist and nature healer. "I do not want you to think me unfriendly," he said stepping closer.

"We wish only to protect what is our own. These men are strangers, and will leave us one day. Already, they have taken enough land that does not belong to them. They have become rich through the suffering of my people. They brought new gods with them when they came, and their gods rule over the towns. But out where you have come from today, our gods still rule, and you must not forget that. Even on the farms, the foreign gods rule, but not on the open plains,——and the Highway runs through the plains.

"So far, you have done nothing against the honor of our gods, and I hope that you will have the wisdom not to do so; but I know that they have offered to pay you well, because you are what they call an expert. You must resist this temptation, and leave our town in peace. Today, you discovered a field thirty acres in extent which you think would be suitable for growing cotton. The signs of our gods are upon that land; they will allow no one to take their last refuge from them! Consider that you have been warned, and do not tell these greedy men of the field."

The Russian proceeded with his intention of washing up, and then went on into the house. They had crackpots where he came from, too, he reflected. The brothers met him with open arms. "We were worried about you, sir," declared Gustavo with a good imitation of genuine concern on his blond features. "Don't tell us you got lost!"

"Well, the truth is I had some

reason for delay," replied the engineer. "I have found a cotton field."

The confusion that broke out in the room knew no bounds. The drinking went on into the small hours of the morning. The engineer said nothing about his car, nor about Santa-Cruz Pachacuti's warning. In the morning, the brothers went out with him in a truck belonging to the estate. They carried a small tractor with them so they could do some test ploughing. The field was in between the crests of two prominent hills, so that they ran no risk of getting lost. The driver was an indian from the oldest family in Nazca, and knew the table-lands like the back of his hand. He obviously disapproved of the expedition. "You will not have luck if you plough out there, gentlemen," he told them cryptically.

The two hills came into view, and Gustavo de la Barra let out an exclamation of surprise, with perhaps a trace of something else in his voice. "You are not suggesting that we plough *here*, are you?" The engineer looked like a child whose candy has been stolen before he could eat it.

"I know of no finer land in this region," he told them. "I guarantee that I can bring water here."

"But there are ground drawings," Julio de la Barra protested in a strange tone, far different from his accustomed baritone.

"Ground drawings do not bring profits to the estate," said the engineer with a nod that didn't permit contradiction. "If you do not like what I have found, pay me and I will leave you to conduct your business as you see fit."

The brothers stared at the ground drawings from the cab of the truck. There were a number of spirals, and a mammoth triangle built to record the southernmost setting place of the Sun at the time of the summer solstice. Complex series of zig-zag lines showed how the Nazca priests had kep track of the movements of the planets. The entire panorama was enough to impress the most uncultured spectator, and the two brothers had had the benefit of a European education.

"We must begin planting next week, if we are to be ready when the waters come. The canal need not be more than half mile long because there is an underground river on the other side of that hill." He motioned with his hand to show the engineer where to start digging. They would qualify under the American agricultural assistance program, because their project came under the heading of development of new land. Theoretically, the country would benefit if the

de la Barra brothers became even richer than they were. The engineer returned to the estate feeling thoroughly satisfied with himself. In the afternoon, a tow truck came up from town and pulled his jeep back to the estates. The cost of the repairs didn't matter now that he had a contract to build a canal.

In the evening, he asked to borrow Julio's car, so that he could stop by the garage and see how the mechanic was coming along. The car was a later American model with automatic shift. His foot pressed a bit too hard on the accelerator as he neared the main entrance to the estate, a gear shifted automatically somewhere in the innards of the machine, and sent him lurching out onto the Highway out of control. He jammed on the brakes for all he was worth, and the car righted itself without going off the road and stalled. ——A tractor trailer on its way to the mines at Marcona did the rest.

The brothers were more upset by the engineer's death than was warranted by their relationship with him. They had known him only a week, and during that time he had not shown himself the hale fellow well met. But when the machinery arrived from the American aid office they couldn't very well say that they'd changed their minds, and so they went ahead with it in spite of their private doubts. The land proved to be all that the engineer said it was, but they found out that Julio had been mistaken in saying there was water just over the hill. The nearest water was seven miles away, and they'd need pumps because part of the way was uphill. The modern farmers of Peru seem to have forgotten that water will always "find its own level", a fact that the worshippers of the Nazca gods knew and employed to good effect.

"We must get water to that field, if we're going to justify our investment," Gustavo snapped late one afternoon. The next morning, he left for Lima to buy the pumps they would need. An American bulldozer was already at work on the canal. It was still winter but spring was on its way. There was a light fog over the Highway, but no cars in sight. Gustavo, like all Latin Americans, was always trying to save his tires because they were a very expensive item in the upkeep of a car. While both shoulders of the Highway were studded with deep ruts and potholes, the center was relatively smooth, and so he swung the big car over into the center of the road. His girl friend in Lima would expect him for lunch at 1.30, it was already 8.30 and the

trip usually took seven hours. He had to make time and do it here before the ancient vehicles belonging to people in the small towns near Lima began to crowd the road.

Gustavo had been driving along the Highway since he was twelve. He knew its every turn and gradient, but this morning his mind was on the pumps. He didn't want to lay out any more cash than necessary. They had mortgaged one of their farms already. Of course the crop would take care of that, but it never did to be overconfident. In his absorption, he forgot that one stretch of the Pan American highway traverses a narrow plateau, about a thousand feet across. The plateau is only about six feet higher than the surrounding desert, and the grade is so slight that the road looks perfectly flat to a passenger in a fast car. Near Nazca, the highway follows a route laid out for the swift messengers of the Incas. A collision between two runners was of little consequence, but it is possible that Gustavo de la Barra didn't even see the car that appeared from behind the slight rise ahead of him, — until it was too late to get out of the way.

"The gods rule the Highway", Santa-Cruz Pachacuti said when they told him of the accident. "The gods will not leave the home of our fathers." Julio de la Barra had enough of Nazca in his blood to know why his brother had died. The engineer's death could have been coincidence, but Gustavo was a good driver, even though sometimes inclined to recklessness. He could not shake off the feeling that the two events were connected. And, what was worse, he remembered an Old Spanish proverb about twins. It said, "Those who were born together shall die together." Julio didn't want to die. His wife was about to have a baby, and he felt that he might be in line for an important government job after the elections. His half-brother Joaquín could help him with the administration of the estate, and, according to the terms of their father's will, Julio became sole owner of the estate upon the death of Gustavo.

Joaquín was a gay enough blade, and, considering the color of his skin, he did well enough in the provincial society of Nazca and of Ica, the next big town. He had always wanted to be an aviator. He had even thought for a time of joining the Peruvian air force, but a slight astigmatism in his left eye had prevented that. The twins had always treated him more like a good friend than like a brother. Their mother was a proud

woman, and looked upon the existence of "the other family" as a blot upon her honor. The twins were more in tune with their environment, and it seem to them virtually inevitable that every man should have more than one romantic interest during his life. Joaquín was a child of his father's old age, and so had the opportunity to be with the old man more than his brothers. His father shared his enthusiasm for airplanes, and when the boy was twenty, he bought him a twin-engine craft with six seats and a bar.

Every year on Peruvian Independence Day, it was Joaquín's custom to fly low over all the towns in the vicinity and scatter patriotic pamphlets to be picked up by the people below. Shortly after Gustavo's death, he acquired a smaller amphibious plane to be used for spraying the cotton with insecticides, and hopping from one farm to another to save time. Santa-Cruz Pachacuti, who was a distant relative on his mother's side repeatedly warned him against landing his little plane in the neighborhood of the ground drawings. "Two have died already, my cousin. Let there not be a third," he said one afternoon as they were walking through the vineyards on the Wine Farm.

"It is a painful spectacle for me to see so many deaths resulting from disrespect for the civilization of the past," continued Santa-Cruz. You may believe as you like, but when gods have been worshipped for thousands of years, they do not die in one day. Perhaps it is nothing more than a psychological phenomenon, and the gods exist only in the minds of their worshippers; perhaps it is more. In either case, it should be enough for you that thousands of your mother's people still believe that these lands should remain inviolate. If you do not take this to heart, I can only pray that your end will be an easy one."

Joaquín thought he knew "how to take" Santa-Cruz. A man who had earned a medical degree, and even completed a post graduate course at Johns Hopkins, could not be classed with the "dirty, dumb Indians" who worked on the farm. The Pachacuti family had been governors of Nazca under the Incas, and still retained many of their old privileges in the Cabildo of the town. Santa-Cruz had always been irrational on the subject of the pre-Spanish culture of Nazca, Joaquín thought. The fact that he had forsaken modern medicine to become little better than a witch-doctor was in keeping with the man's personality. When he came back from the capital, Santa-Cruz had

brought with him many publications purporting to prove the value of the Indian herb medicines. He even tried to get the white residents to look at his "proofs" but without much success. The Indian was clearly inferior to the European. Francisco Pizarro had proven that by conquering an empire with a handful of knights-cavalier. Anyone who doubted his basic truth was guilty of an audacity founded on ignorance.

Santa-Cruz had revived the old songs at holiday time, and taught Quechua at the public school. The big landowners who ruled the town didn't think much of his activities, but it was like the case of the mosquito biting an elephant, they thought, and rumbled complacently on their way.

Joaquín listened politely to everything that Santa-Cruz had to say, —and then went to see about installing the pumps which had arrived from Lima a week after Gustavo's death.

Carrying one pump at a time, Joaquín went back and forth from the estate to the new field. Every time he landed his plane on the flat surface the wheels of the plane drew angry lines across the designs on the ground beneath. The Indian workers, waiting for him a little distance away, tried not to look at these times, but otherwise concealed their feelings with the stolid aloofness that characterizes their behavior to foreigners. Joaquín, although half Indian, and the son of a man whose family had been in the country for five centuries, was a foreigner to them.

"Our fathers believed that the gods lived in the air. That is why they drew their prayers on the ground," said one of the elders of the community that evening over his beer. "We must be prepared to receive Joaquín in the graveyard. As a man, he is the son of his father, but when he dies, he goes back to being another Indian just like the rest of us."

It was Independence Day, and all the people of Nazca were waiting of Joaquín de la Barra. Because of the complicated maneuvers he wanted to perform, Joaquín took along a young college student who was visiting at the estate. The student could throw the leaflets out of the plane, and he could devote himself exclusively to the business of piloting. At each town, they came in with terrific speed and buzzed the town hall. They came so close that the college student was convinced on several occasions that they would meet their end then and there. The people who had been celebrating the occasion since the night before, were really in no

condition to appreciate the daring displays of aerobatics that were put on for their benefit, but they yelled just as well as if they had been stone sober,—and a lot louder. Joaquín had been drinking too, so he yelled back, to the surprise of the officials who had to pretend dignity for the occasion, even if they felt little of it.

The mechanic at the civil aviation hangars in Lima had tuned up the plane's motors so that they sounded like a whole convoy of jet bombers. Latin mechanics know how to get the most noise out of a given make of engine: many of their customers confuse it with horsepower.

After leaving Nazca, their itinerary took them to the mining town of Marcona, where Joaquín's mother lived. They dutifully buzzed the town hall, scattered their load of pamphlets entitled "Peru Tomorrow", and yelled back at the crowd. Then Joaquín spotted his mother's car parked down near one of the piers where the company's fleet of ore carriers pulled up to take on cargo. More than flying over the land, he loved to fly over the sea. That was why he bought the small amphibian as soon as he began receiving the additional salary due him as co-administrator of the estate. That was why he had told his mother to wait for him at the pier. He wanted her to know that her little boy had grown up.

The plane came perilously near the surface of the water, as they dived towards the sea off the end of the Marcona piers. And then they levelled off and started a full-power climb, as steep as the plane was capable of. The student repeated several oaths about pigheaded Indians which he had occasion to use before on this eventful trip. This time, however, Joaquín seemed to take notice of the personal element in the insult. Perhaps it was the fact that his mother was watching from the pier which motivated his rash action; perhaps it was his desire to show a white boy what an Indian could do when he wanted to.

He grabbed at the stick and manipulated it with a savage thrust. A double loop should change this kid's ideas about the Indians he thought. The plane was half way over on its side before he remembered that the mechanic in Lima had removed the safety belts and forgotten to put them back again ...

His mother's delight at her son's exceptional display of skill in the air changed to unthinking horror as she saw two bodies fall clear of the plane into the turbulent waters below. The aircraft vanished over the western horizon.

Julio was the last of the de la Barras, and he lived as a man condemned. The neighbors, even his own wife, were frightened of him. He gave up his frequent trips to the capital and the administration of the estate suffered from neglect. Much of the crop was lost because he refused to hire a plane to fumigate the fields. It'd remind him of Joaquín.

But Julio would not give up the new field. Three men died for it, he told his wife, and he would see that they did not die in vain. One day he brought home a pot he'd found while ploughing the new field. He put it on the mantle in the living room, next to his father's polo trophies, and he would sit for hours in the evening staring at it. The pots represented a Nazca god who had eight heads, much like those of a cat. No matter which way he turned the pot, the god's likeness stared out at Julio in mute accusation. He told a visitor, "The little god is angry with me for stealing his fields." He began to laugh but the visitor, who was an archaeologist, didn't see the joke.

To the Indians in the neighborhood, it seemed as if the Biblical ten plagues had hit Julio's farm. First came the crows, and when they'd trapped and shot enough to frighten away the rest, the locusts came, greedily eating the blossoms of the cotton plant and thereby ruining the texture of the mature fiber. When the locusts had finished their work, the worms set in, and when they had gone, an early drought doomed the rest of the crop. Julio took not a single sack of cotton from the new field: it wasn't worth the trouble to go out and look for it among the blighted plants. The mortgage came due and the bank foreclosed on one of the farms belonging to the principal holdings of the estate.

When the little cotton there was had been picked and ginned and shipped off to market, Julio could do nothing but wait for the following year and hope for better luck. A little before Easter, Santa-Cruz came to see him.

"The formal reason for my visit is to ask for a donation to my Boys' Club," began Santa-Cruz, "but you know that I have other things in mind, as well. Men do not listen to what they call superstition, but in this case you might accurately call the advice I am about to give just plain common sense. Don Julio, you must not plough the new field again the spring. The damage that has already been done is enormous, but with patience the wound will heal. Every year, the wind will carry away some of the loose soil, and soon the designs will be visible again. Then the people can go up from

the town and clean the sacred drawings with straw brooms. It was not your idea to plant cotton on that field; your only mistake was to let profit become more important to you than the honor of your family.

"You must forgive the liberty with which I speak, because it arises from a sincere concern for your welfare. In the town, we have our own way of knowing the future, —not with scientific instruments, it is true, but dependable nevertheless.

"You know the old man they call Pukasupai. He is a very old man indeed. In the parish hall you will find that his birth was recorded 108 years ago. Yet he earns his living with same ability as a man half his age, and sleeps no more than four hours a day. He is a holy man and has never touched wine nor women. And he is your friend, because your father once helped his sister at the time of childbirth.

"He has sent me to you, and assured me that, if you do as he asks he will insure good crops for you next season. I do not know whether his promise will mean anything to you, but his age gives him honor in the opinion of the town. Certainly, it cannot do any harm to give him the benefit of the doubt. The new field alone cannot save your estate, and if you give it up you may be saving yourself much trouble during the years to come."

Julio sat staring at the mantel in silence. "I will not surrender to ignorance," he said, apparently including his visitor among those whom he felt deserved that description.

The eight-headed god on the pot looked more angry than ever. Santa-Cruz said, "Do you think it ignorant to respect a house of worship erected by your ancestors?"

"In the first place, they were not *my* ancestors," Julio announced with emphasis, "and in the second place I do not consider pagan shrines worthy of the respect of a Christian person. When the de la Barras came to Peru, human sacrifice was a commonplace; when we outlawed it, the Indians rebelled, and accused us of religious intolerance. —The field will be plowed in the spring if I have to do it with oxen, and failing that, I'll pull the plow myself. Is that clear, Dr. Pachacuti?"

Santa-Cruz rose with the intention of leaving. Julio glowered in his corner and addressed himself to the walls: "How much misfortune can a man suffer and still care what happens to him! I am the last of the family, and I will not lower the standard of Christianity in the face of this pagan threat. This I swear by the Holy Virgin of Lurín, by San-

tiago and by all the saints in Heaven." The formula of the oath was traditional in the province. Santa-Cruz knew better than to argue with that kind of logic.

The real issue, as he saw it, was not Catholicism vs. paganism,—the people of Nazca were among the most religious of Peru, and their devotion to the church had never been questioned by ecclesiastical authorities,—it was a question of respect for the dead. Certainly the death of three men should convince Julio that, whatever the cause, the cultivation of the new field would not bring prosperity or good health. It was the smallest fraction of his estate, and it wasn't as if he had to live off the proceeds from that field alone. Santa-Cruz, who lived on the minute salary of a public health doctor, could not sympathize with Julio's stubbornness, nor could he understand how the subject of religion had become confused in the other man's mind with the separate and distinct question of respecting one's anchestors.

After Santa-Cruz left, Julio remained in the living room with his eyes fixed magnetically on the god-pot. To him, through the death of his brothers, the whole pre-Spanish culture of the region became an object unholy and fearful in its proportions. Wherever he went, the ancient gods were there watching him. He had even brought one of them into his own house, and had not the power to evict it!

There must be some hope for my family, he thought. Indian gods were the creations of a primitive society, living under the heavy veils of superstition. He would not, could not let them ruin his life.

His wife, Emperatriz, was in the seventh month of pregnancy. The doctor had said that it would be a difficult birth, and he must take her into Lima in time. At least the child had had no share in cultivating the new field. The vengeful gods would surely not visit the sins of the fathers upon the children!

"Julio, oh Julio, we must go quickly. I think that . . ." Emperatriz sounded like an animal in pain. The slight tremor he observed in her hands concerned him more than anything else. She was suffering more than the doctor had thought she would.

The sportscar went careening along the highway. Julio knew that Gustavo had met his end along the same stretch of the Highway. The new field was near-by. Concern for his wife blotted out all other considerations. He drove calmly, deliberately, with his eyes on the road. His depression made him a bet-

ter driver; there was no chance that he would hit an on-coming car. He accelerated only when the traffic permitted, and slowed down when he could not see around the bends in the road. Then he saw the tunnel up ahead, really a natural cleft in the rock, and only about twenty feet long, —he barrelled towards it, fearful that he might have to wait for the cars in front to decide who went through first,— always a problem in a highly emotional part of the country.

When they saw don Julio's car, the other cars pulled over a bit and let him go by. It happened that they were all from the neighborhood and knew about Doña Emperatriz's condition. Once, about midway in the tunnel, they scraped fenders with a truck-driver coming in the opposite direction. His colorful language provided a brief diversion for the mother-to-be.

Julio could see that his wife was beginning to show more and more the signs of imminent childbirth. There was a doctor in the town up ahead. They could stop there and call Lima for an ambulance: If only Joaquín had been there with his plane!

Medical service in the back woods of Peru is not all that it might be. Doctors like Santa-Cruz were few and a far between. The man they were going to now was a refugee. Under the law, he could not operate——even to save a life.

Julio cursed and fumed, and tried to get the Minister of Health on the telephone. The doctor told him that his wife was suffering from an internal hemorrhage and only immediate surgery could save her. In contrast to most of the big land owners in the province. Julio was almost religiously dedicated to his wife. The promise of a child, even if it were not a son and heir, had been the only thing that made the last years bearable for him. There had been a fertility problem, not unusual in a country where children were given tobacco, liquor and not enough sleep. A French specialist had taken care of that, for a price that made his neighbors look on in envy.

The spirits of the new field were in the delivery room when his wife died. Julio offered the old man any amount if he would try and save the baby. "The Minister of Health . . ." muttered the doctor over and over, looking at the wall and trying to forget the scene in the next room.

Julio went out to the car and got the shotgun. The man would operate if he had to kill him to make him to do it; such is the illogic of man in moments of stress.

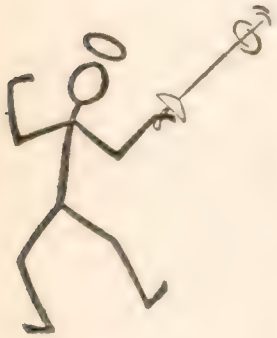
Strange to say, the doctor had

his surgical instruments spread out on the desk as Julio walked in. "I had to wait until you forced me to operate, sir. I wish to God you had done it before; but I do not think I could have saved her. There is no blood between here and Lima, and she needed an immediate transfusion. Let us see what we can do for the child." With those words, he went through the door, a perfect example of Hippocrates in exile. A man trained in the creed of healing whom war had brought to this modest town, and deprived of his professional dignity. There were hundreds such in Peru. Julio thought only of his child.

The baby was born: a girl. The doctor went out to find a nurse, and Julio held the child, weeping.

He would not plough the new field this year, he decided.

THE PERILS OF JACK STRANGEWAYS



One of the main duties of writers of serials published in boys magazines in England was to provide a sensational ending each week, where the hero was usually left in some great peril or left with certain death—preferably a bloody one—staring him hungrily in the face. The purpose of this was simply to ensure that the young reader, kept a full week in suspense, would most certainly buy the next week's issue.

They still tell this story about one of these writers . . .

The author, who was extremely fond of the good things in life (i.e., wine, women and song), had just finished his weekly instalment—leaving the hero, Jack Strangeways, bound and gagged at the bottom of a pit, the red hot walls of which were slowly closing in.

He had received his check for that week's instalment and had promised faithfully to deliver the solution within a few days. But days went by, and it got nearer and nearer to the dead-line—and there was no instalment. The editor was frantic, failed to locate the writer, and the editor, and those writers whom he'd been able to locate, began trying to write the missing instalment. But, although they attempted all sorts of solutions, they could hit on no plausible way in which Jack Strangeways could get out of his horrible predicament.

Almost at the last moment, hours before press-time, the missing author had been found in a drunken stupor in a house which Jack Strangeways would never have approved of—he was rushed to the Turkish baths—sobered up, and was then brought by taxi to the editor's office and placed in front of a typewriter.

The editor, and a great crowd of others, watched fascinated as he prepared to type out the words which would deal with the situation, and which had baffled and beaten them all.

Without a moment's hesitation, he began to attack the typewriter. "*With one bound,*" they read over his shoulder, "*Jack Strangeways was free. . . .*"

W.O.G.L.

exhibit A

by William O'Farrell

YOU'LL BE NICE to Joe Haller, won't you?" I asked Felicity. "It's only for one evening. He's leaving for California tomorrow."

My wife pretended to yawn. "I always am, aren't I?"

"Aren't you what, dear?"

"Nice to these characters you bring home from your trips."

That requires an explanation. I'm an art dealer; my business takes me to the Coast a couple of times a year and to Europe only a little less often. It's true that I sometimes run into people who might be described as "characters," and that I occasionally invite one to drop in at our apartment in New York. Felicity gives them drinks and her attention, and usually discovers in them the same traits which I had previously found and liked. Under her pose of aloofness my wife is as interested in people as I am, and I was curious to see how she'd react to Joe.

He was different, unlike any of his predecessors. For the last five days, coming across from England, he had shared my

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William O'Farrell, who will be remembered by many of us for his CAUSEWAY TO THE PAST, THIN EDGE OF VIOLENCE, and THE SNAKES OF ST. CYR, and for his other novels, appeared in most national magazines, such as Cosmopolitan, Collier's, *etc. A beautiful craftsman, he wrote about our times, about people who were credible and very much "alive", as in this story of a man with a very strange hobby. . . . Many miss him. H.S.S.*

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Miss Blanche C. Gregory, the agent for the Estate of the author.

table in the dining room, and I still wasn't sure whether I liked him or not. I only knew that he fascinated me, but the exact nature of this fascination was more than I could figure out.

"He'll probably bring his camera," I told Felicity. "He has some money and a beautiful camera, and he won't be here five minutes before he starts showing you photographs of himself. You'll find them interesting. Joe's photographs have to be seen to be disbelieved."

"Disbelieved?"

"I use the word advisedly," I said.

The doorbell rang. "Five minutes," I reminded her, getting up.

Joe beat my estimated time by four minutes and fifteen seconds. He started his monologue precisely three-quarters of a minute after he arrived — he was a plumpish young man with a round face and the innocent blue eyes of a startled baby. I clocked him while he shook hands with Felicity, explaining shyly why he'd brought his camera—he'd been buying some new lighting equipment, and there to prove it were the lights. He then sat down in a chair and, pulling out his handkerchief, just happened to dislodge a pack of photographs.

I think it was less the implausibility of his snapshots that interested me than the effect they seemed to have on him. He'd come out with a picture of himself wearing a hooded parka, for instance, and tell you that it was snapped in a concentration camp near Murmansk. When you said, "Really?"—as invariably you did—he would add that the blurred figure in the background was his fellow prisoner, a White Russian ex-prince and counter-revolutionist who had been shot the same afternoon the picture was taken. At this point his round blue eyes would watch you keenly, and if you appeared to believe him—as, of course you tried to do—a small contented smile would start to spread across his face. Then Joe Haller, the essentially timid Joe, would disappear. The man of action, hero of a hundred romantic adventures around the world, would take his place.

Joe in the uniform of a Central American republic's army. Joe in India sighting a rifle while riding an elephant. Joe in a Venetian gondola with a beautiful woman who, according to him, was an Italian movie star whose uncle was a count. All of Joe's women were either actresses or related to nobility, or both. When he asked me to snap him with Felicity, I said I didn't want her getting ideas above her station. I said a number of other things, but Felicity shushed me with a

look. She had been hooked in the same manner I had been. People did not steal money from blind men, or kick small dogs—or hurt Joe Haller's feelings. It wouldn't have been fair.

"Tell you what," Joe compromised. "We'll take all three of us together. I can do it with this camera. See this?" He pointed to a little gadget.

I saw. His camera was equipped with one of those timing devices, the photographic fanatic's delight. He posed us on a couch; then, when everything was set, he pressed a gadget and hurried over to squeeze between us. It was not until ten whirring seconds later that the camera clicked. When that happened I was watching Joe. On his face was the same smile that he had worn in all the other pictures. It was an I-told-you-so smile that almost bordered on gloating, and it worried me.

I continued to worry after he had gone. "It's all right as far as you're concerned," I told Felicity. "You'll be exhibited as the beautiful *première danseuse* he once knew in Egypt, the one who turned out to be related to a King. But what's he going to make of me?"

"What's the difference? It's just a game he's playing. And I think it's a shame."

"What is?"

"That any man's life should be so empty that he has to escape that far from it," she said.

Anyway, Joe left, and I didn't think of him or of the photograph again until one morning months later when Felicity looked up from her newspaper. "Remember Joe Haller? Didn't you give him letters of introduction to some people on the Coast?"

I said I had, and asked her why.

"He's married an old friend of yours, Martha Maynard."

"I didn't give him a letter to Martha. I wouldn't have done a dirty trick like that to Joe," I said.

Everyone over a certain age remembers Martha Maynard as a picture star, and everyone under that age has at least read about her in the papers. When she was twenty her lovely face was on the cover of every other movie magazine; and twenty years later she still rated a paragraph whenever she got married, and half a column whenever she got divorced. Her divorces rated more space because they were more sensational. A quotation from Martha, the middle-aged bride, that "This one is for good" was an old story, but it was always fun a few years later to read an interview with the ex-groom. Morbid, of course, but fun.

It isn't often that people's

lives recross each other often enough for one person to keep track of another person, and add up a series of facts and impressions into a complete and rounded history. But it does happen occasionally. It was in the cards that I would encounter Joe twice more.

The first time was about two years later. Felicity and I were aboard a ship that had just left Le Havre for New York. We were having dinner when Felicity whispered, "Martha Maynard's with us. Martha and what is left of your old pal."

I saw what she meant. Their table was only twenty feet away. Except for certain natural ravages, Martha hadn't changed much from the scornful Roman debutante who, back in the old super-colossals, had sat in Caesar's Colosseum box and egged on the lions to eat their dinner. Joe had the resigned look of a Christian martyr who has been tentatively nibbled at and knows what's coming next. I took one hasty glance at him and turned away.

They had to pass our table when they left. I spotted their approach by watching Felicity. At the critical moment, just before she would either have to speak or develop a sudden interest elsewhere, I got up. "Hello," I said. "Nice to see both of you again."

Joe stopped dead. He started to speak, but Martha beat him to it. "Hello," she said in the rasping voice which had ended her career in pictures. "How are you, Felicity?" She turned back to me without waiting for an answer. "That's right. You used to know my husband, didn't you?"

"Yes," I said. "We're old friends, aren't we, Joe?"

Martha answered for him. "So he tells me. Well, nice to have seen you. Come along, Joseph."

Joe managed a weak smile before he followed her. "We'll get together later on," he said.

We did get together, but not until the last night of the voyage. Occasionally, before then, I'd catch him watching us from the far table to which Martha had removed him after that first meal. He had a strange expression. As Felicity said, with feminine disregard for the mechanics of men's clothing, he looked as though he were loaded down with brand-new photographs but all the zippers on his pockets had got stuck.

On that last night, however, when he slipped away to join us in the smoking room, he produced no pictures. I don't know why that saddened me, but somehow it did. Joe's life as a man of action may have been based on fiction, but in the old

days he had at least been fictionally alive.

The funeral atmosphere affected Felicity as it did me. She tried at last to rouse him with a question. "Do you still have that lovely camera, Joe?"

He looked up quickly. His hand darted toward his pocket but he caught it just in time. "It's in my cabin. I don't use it much these days."

But I had seen that eager, darting gesture. "Let's see some of your latest photographs," I said.

"No." He stared down at his still untasted drink. "I haven't taken a picture since my marriage. Honest, that's the truth."

Then it happened. A rasping voice said, "Show them the old ones, then," and Martha suddenly appeared behind Joe's chair. "Give them to me," she went on, sitting down beside him. "You mustn't be so modest, dear."

"Really, Martha—" Joe was a little wild-eyed. "Really, I'd rather not."

"Give me the pictures. I'll do it for you," Martha said.

So we were treated to Joe's adventures, after all; and I'll say this much for Martha—she put them over with a bang. She had his whole routine down pat, and she delivered it with interpolations of her own. She'd gone to a lot of trouble to learn the inside history of those photographs, and when she had finished with Joe's highly colored versions, she would rip each one to pieces. It wasn't hard. Just a few caustic words telling how much he'd paid to rent his Central American uniform, for instance, did the trick. It was easy to show him up as a cheap pretender, more at home with a trick camera than a gun. Anyone could have done it. Anyone with a taste for torturing small children, that is.

That's what Joe looked like when she finally stopped—like a small boy who has been badly beaten up. He didn't say anything; he just kept staring at the table. I didn't say anything, either. Martha was too tough for me.

She was too tough for Felicity too, but that didn't stop my brave spouse from trying. "That performance rates about C-minus, Martha. Satirical comedy requires a lighter touch." she said.

Martha smiled nastily. "Perhaps. But when I want dramatic criticism I won't come to the daughter of a South American dictator who only learned to speak English after she was twenty-five." She flipped another snapshot on the table, one we hadn't seen before.

Felicity and I examined it together. I'd always wanted to

know what Joe had made of the photograph he'd taken in our apartment, and it was an interesting job. He had blocked out our sober domestic background and replaced it with a suggestion of a gaudy palace. Joe sat on a marble veranda between Felicity and myself, and by my side was a tall, expensive looking drink.

"By the way," Martha said, and I realized uneasily that she was now addressing me, "after the revolution when Felicity's father was deposed and Joseph saved your life and then lent you money to get married and buy a business, did you ever pay him back? Don't bother answering," she added, rising and giving Joe a sharp nudge on the shoulder. "Joseph, say good night to your friends."

Joe's face was scarlet. He got up and followed Martha, but he didn't say good night. I kept my eyes on him and, just before he left the room, he looked back once.

Felicity, who was facing the other way, said sadly, "Martha really meant it when she told the reporters that *this* marriage was for good. She's found the perfect whipping boy. We've seen the last of Joe."

"I'm not so sure," I told her. Across the smoke-filled room I'd had a good look at his face.

We didn't meet him in the morning; they took him off before the other passengers were allowed to disembark. We didn't see him again until Felicity and I were called as witnesses at his trial. We did our best, but there was never any doubt about the outcome. They convicted him, all right.

The funny thing is, Joe didn't seem unhappy. In fact, at the crucial moment when the district attorney handed *Exhibit A* to the jury, he leaned forward eagerly. He watched the jury examine the self-taken photograph which showed him in the very act of strangling his wife; and, as one by one each juror looked up from the picture to stare at him incredulously, a small contented smile spread across his lips.

(Continued from other side)

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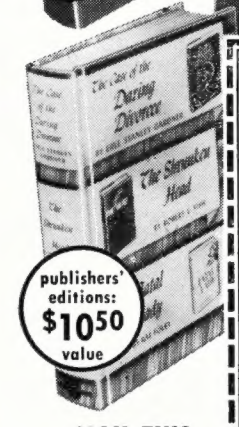

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